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The Future that Doesn't Work

A 'fatuous auction about the size of tax cuts' and 'more than ever a source of distraction from serious prescription' is how the Cambridge economist Wynn Godley dismissed the present pre-Budget discussion. In fact the level of debate has been pitched at a remarkably anxious and diffuse theoretical level with the Governor of the Bank of England, the Permanent Secretary at the Treasury and Denis Healey all wading in within the space of a week. Perhaps, as the economic crisis deepens into its fourth year, we are at last witnessing the Establishment's realisation that neither oil nor patriotism will be enough.

If any such shift is occurring, it is at the last hour. We now stand on the edge of a precipice. Between 1976 and 1981, the labour market will have increased by 886,000 ensuring, in the jargon of the Manpower Services Commission, that there will be a job gap of 2,300,000. Another million will be added in the following five years. To reduce unemployment to normal levels by 1981 requires the creation of 2 million net jobs, an absolute reversal of every trend the economy has shown since the war. Just to hold the line on jobs we will need unprecedented growth. In the face of this, the Government seems to have admitted that a million will be without jobs to 1982 – indeed the recent Expenditure White Paper represented the formal abandonment of the full employment objective. To add another twist, the Treasury predicts implausibly low levels of productivity during the coming reflation. If the Treasury is indeed wrong (as most independent forecasters claim) and productivity does rise, revealing hidden underemployment, there will be little need for business to take on labour on the scale required. Yet if the Treasury is right and productivity remains nearly stagnant how can Britain be competitive and avoid the familiar payments' deficits? The basis of the Government's strategy remains, unhappily, that of Roy Jenkins in 1968 – a reduction in the size of the public sector in the hope, and no more, that exports and investment will rise. Besides being an electoral failure, this crowding-out theory has produced a growth rate of 1 per cent in the last two years. The recent rise in the exchange rate and the dogged recession has already diminished the export successes of 1977. Yet the White Paper's dogmatism on holding down public expenditure means that we are absolutely reliant on export growth since the rise in imports generated by the expansion of the private sector is greater than that caused by an increase in the public.

In the summer of 1975, when unemployment first touched a million under this Labour Government, Michael Foot publicly lamented the 'tragedy and waste' and admitted that 'long-term measures were needed to meet this challenge'. Long-term measures are precisely what we have not had. Coherent and socialist industrial policies were abandoned in the first months of the Government's life and we have had to live with their absence ever since. The Government's feeble alibi, the industrial strategy, has been so apolitical, unexceptionable and ineffectual that now we do not have the freedom to consider independent strong reflation without import controls.

Such controls would be both self-defeating and egocentric. They would have to last at least five years to work through, by that time other countries and perhaps other socialist parties would have retaliated, unable to see why Britain has a unique right to protection. The immediate alternative to controls or de-industrialisation is to press the surplus countries to reflate. Minnows as we are in the struggle between the Monetarist mark and the Keynesian dollar, Britain nevertheless as the country with the highest unemployment in Europe has a right to be heard. The recent German public relations exercise, intended to prove that the SPD has done all it can, constitutionally and economically, to reflate has so far failed to convince. Apart from monetarist strictures the German problem, like the Japanese, is an over-commitment to exporting (exports of goods and services account for a quarter of the German GDP). Until they accept the need to adapt that economic structure there is little hope for Europe's unemployed.

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Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

The Ilford Defection

If you'd ever had to spend a day at our printer's down in Southend, you would know something about the so-called people of so-called Ilford North. You're standing on Liverpool Street Station with your beaker of tea and – oh – a bacon sandwich, say, and you're minding your own business, when all of a sudden a filthy little train pulls in and – aaargh! they're upon you, pushing and barging, trampling and rushing to get to their work. They seem, I must say, very keen on their work. (On one occasion, swept up by the crowd, I found myself forced backwards down the tube entrance, pelted on to the down escalator and actually shoved on to the train. It wasn't till Tottenham Court Road that I was able to recover my balance, change directions and have another shot at Southend.) In the evening, after a hard day's proof-reading, you get back to Liverpool Street, open the carriage door and – aaargh! There they are again, rushing home to do horrible things to their wives. They don't look their best in the early morning. They don't look their best in the evening. To be charitable, I suppose that, like misembryanthemums, they're absolutely staggering at mid-day.

(Incidentally, have you ever noticed the sound of commuter train doors being shut in a covered station – Liverpool Street, Fenchurch Street or Charing Cross in particular? That hollow slamming? It is exactly the noise one hears at the edge of a battlefield, a couple of miles away from the artillery, during a comparative lull in the fighting. But I digress.)

There's no such place as Ilford North, by the way. As Gertrude Stein said of America, 'There's no *there* there.' You can't get lost in the constituency, because to do so would imply that, in other circumstances, you might be, as it were, found. So you take this turning instead of that one. What's the difference? The same high streets stretch out before you, the same neat houses. It's a remarkably clean place. The houses are in very good nick. But it doesn't exist.

Sometimes, while canvassing with Labour, I came across some cheering figures. There was a young Spanish woman who was uncertain which way she would vote: she thought politics a matter of morals, and she would vote for the party which had the best morals. What sort of morals? Well, she was very much against hanging. She didn't think it right to hang people. The reason being – if you hang people, some of them turn out to be innocent. Much better to put them in prison and then, if they turn out to be innocent, you can let them go. In that case, said Tessa Jowell, she should vote Labour, since Labour was firmly against hanging and so was she, Tessa Jowell. All right, said the woman. I'll vote Labour. She wished us luck on the day.

Another was a miner's daughter. 'Which way do you *think* I'll vote?' she said: 'I'm a miner's daughter. Where I come from, if you put a stuffed pig up as Labour candidate everyone would vote for it.' She came from Yorkshire, and was considered, she said, as a stranger in these parts, a foreigner. She had a strong line on women: 'I think that any woman who doesn't vote in this election ought to be fined.' 'Well,' said Mrs Jowell, 'I hope you tell that to all your friends.' 'I don't have any friends here,' said the woman, disconcertingly. 'Everybody hates me.'

In one block of flats all the doorposts had been recently daubed. 'The Alien is in your midst.' 'The Alien will not be moved. I tell you he will not be moved.' 'The Alien is here to stay. He will bash your fucking brains out.' I have improved on the spelling, and am unable to reproduce the mad quality of the handwriting. We met a young couple on the stairs. Which way would they be voting? They hadn't decided. Yes they normally voted Labour, but this time they weren't sure. There were certain things they were thinking about. What sort of things? Well, *that* lot for instance (indicating a Pakistani's flat), our friends from overseas. The couple had moved out from Bethnal Green, in order to get away from that kind of thing. Now – they weren't National Front – don't get them wrong. But they were *thinking* about how they would vote. They thought Mrs Thatcher was right that immigration must be stopped, but, no, they didn't actually believe she would do anything about it. Yes, all right, she was just using the issue in order to stir up racial hatred. But nevertheless, they were *thinking* about it.

This kind of reserving of position by former Labour voters was not uncommon. A young American with whom I canvassed was astonished to hear a woman say, 'We're all socialists in this house. We come from the East End. But I'm very worried about communism. Those Trotskyists in Newham . . . ' 'But this isn't Newham.' 'I know, but they're taking over the party . . .' The American asked: 'How can she say she's a socialist and yet not vote for Labour?' And the answer is, presumably, that the family were a symptom of the decayed tradition of East End socialism. Newham was not, perhaps, an issue, but an excuse for a defection. The American had another shock in store around the corner. 'You know what that woman said? She said that she wouldn't vote Labour this time because Tessa Jowell was living with a man who was not her husband.' 'That's right,' we said. 'Oh,' he said. Apparently, though, the husband found this sort of behaviour rather less unacceptable.

Among the Labour Party organisers there was a mood of melancholy optimism. People, that is to say, were being very brave, Alan Lee Williams, the Member for Hornchurch, told me that when the campaign had begun the Tories, he reckoned, had had a 5 to 8 per cent lead, but that this had narrowed. The National Front march had sharpened the resolve of the Labour supporters, and this would bring people out voting. Even if Labour didn't win, they had showed, in a campaign dominated by immigration, that one could fight back. And so we went round saying, 'It's going to be a very close thing. Very important to have your vote.'

Alas on Wednesday morning the *Telegraph* published a Gallup poll showing the Tories in a 22 per cent lead, rising to 30 per cent among the more likely voters. No doubt the Labour interest had increased, but so, it appeared, had the opposition. The Tories had siphoned off the Liberal vote and, apparently, the National Front vote as well. If all went according to plan, they would deliver a sufficient blow to the Callaghan morale to make him think twice about that October election. And indeed the only thing which has not gone according to plan so far has been the rail strike. Imagine those vicious hordes having to make their own way home, and then voting. No wonder the *Daily Mail* – 'What a way to run a rail strike!' – was a mite disappointed.

Where does this leave the Government? The papers have been quick to pick up and emphasise the change of tone in both the Prime Minister's and the Blob's pronouncements on the world economy. It's now Jittery Jim and Dismal Denis. If, as expected, the Tories pull off a striking victory in Ilford North, will it not seem as if the period of Labour complacency has come to a very sticky end? The Blob, on his Tuesday visit to the constituency, told the Labour workers in private that Callaghan's personal view was they could hold the seat. Was this really the PM's view, or was it just another of the Blob's whoppers?

Certainly there has always been a danger that Blob-style euphoria would lose Labour the next general election. Might we not see the recent reversals for the Government, and the result of the by-election, as a salutary kick in the pants? Certainly a resounding defeat (and I speak as one who . . . blah-blah-blah) can have an invigorating effect. You feel: fish that for a lark!

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Anthony Howard

The Second Tory Party

Eighteen years ago when I started writing about politics in the NS there were plainly and perceptibly two Tory Parties. The one that was in the saddle was, so far as these terms have any meaning, broadly 'liberal', very conscious that the battlefield of politics was the 'middle ground' and determined that the Conservatives should capture it. It derived its protection from Mr Macmillan, its ideology from Mr Butler and its inspiration from Mr Macleod. But it by no means had things all its own way.

It only required there to be some awkward step to be taken – say to release Dr Banda from prison, or to pull the rug out from under Mr Tshombe in Katanga, or even to acquiesce in the ending of the 'independent' British deterrent – and 'the second Tory Party' began to mobilise and organise. It was, not to put too fine a point upon it, a party of the Merovingians – a party for whom change was not (as the One Nation Group once called it) 'our ally' but 'our enemy'. Whenever someone like Sir Roy Welensky popped up at London Airport to denounce the latest Colonial Office 'betrayal' in Central Africa, it heard its own distant sound of tribal drums. Signatures showered on to the Commons Order Paper, the weekly meeting of the 1922 Committee converted itself into something approaching a court-martial and Mr Macmillan was reduced to making one of his soothing perambulations round the Carlton Club clasping an elbow here and patting a shoulder there. True, he usually got his own way in the end – but never without a struggle.

The then 'second Tory Party', in a word, had muscle – and knew how to use it. If it did not care for the aims or objectives of the party leadership, it was never shy of saying so – and deliberately sought to strengthen the position within the cabinet of those it believed to be its sympathisers.

It is worth, I believe, contrasting the position today. The roles, of course, are reversed: it is the Right that now runs the show while the party's 'liberals' find themselves in exile. But that is not the most important difference: the hostages from the *ancien régime* that Mrs Thatcher still retains in her shadow cabinet – men like Willie Whitelaw, Jim Prior, Ian Gilmour, Tom King even Lord Hailsham – are bound and trussed because the present 'second Tory Party' appears to have no appetite for disagreement, no desire for battle at all. The favourite term of opprobrium on the Tory Right for those who take a softer view than their own has always been that they are 'wet'. The conduct of the more liberal Tories ever since Mrs Thatcher became leader of the party – and particularly in the past few weeks – has certainly done nothing to demolish that charge.

Consider what has occurred. The former leader of the party has only to register a dissenting voice on Mrs Thatcher's immigration plans and he is promptly insulted with impunity by the ragtag and bobtail of the Tory Right-wing. One voice, just *one,* is raised in his defence – and Mr Peter Walker promptly finds himself the victim of the same treatment. Mr Walker, however, remains not only the honourable exception to the indictment I am making out but also the ultimate proof of the timidity of his colleagues.

On the question of race he has a consistent, constructive record – dating back to the days when he was Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment and launched various studies of the conditions in our various inner city ghettos. He has in a real sense provided 'the alternative programme' to Mrs Thatcher's policies: but there has hardly been much sign of other Tory MPs rallying to his standard.

It is true that there are Tories ready to register in private their disquiet at the more recent developments within the party. They do not, they confide, much care for the notion of immigration and law and order being the alternate stand-by subjects for the Opposition's Supply Days in the Commons; nor are they happy with the new dominance under the Thatcher regime of market researchers and advertising men

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(leadership, they boldly whisper, means more to them than simply placing an ear to the ground and then parroting back whatever veins of discontent you have managed to detect). But what they have not done – as the Right would certainly have done in similar circumstances – is to apply any pressure, still less to run up any flag of revolt. Instead, those even in the highest places weakly acquiesce in Mrs Thatcher's right to declare new policies more or less at will and meekly undertake not to make a fuss, even if the first thing they heard of the new line on immigration was when they read about it on a club tape – which is precisely what happened to Mr Whitelaw on the last Monday in January.

The liberal wing of the Tory Party may never have been aggressive (that was hardly Mr Butler's style) but it has never looked quite so feeble as it does today. Maybe the kindest thing to say about Mr Whitelaw and his like-minded shadow cabinet *confrères* is that they have not even now fully emerged from the state of shock that overtook them following Mrs Thatcher's election to the leadership. But what about the younger MPs, the men with nothing to lose and only their future to invest in? Some, of course, are convicted out of their own mouths. I can still hear the earnest tones in which one much-publicised Conservative 'personality' told me in December 1973 that he regarded Mr Heath as 'the new Cromwell' and that he would 'quit public life tomorrow' if ever he were brought down. He now sits, I notice, perfectly happily on Mrs Thatcher's frontbench – along, it is only fair to add, with a number of even more notorious defectors, including Mr Heath's own former political secretary, Douglas Hurd.

Yet it is not the careerists who primarily concern me. The people who really ought to be making their voices heard today are those who in the past have made something of a profession out of being 'liberal' Tories – MPs like Sir Anthony Meyer, Mrs Lynda Chalker, Mr Nicholas Scott, Sir George Sinclair, Mr Robert Rhodes James, Mr Terence Higgins, Mr David Madel, Mr Hugh Dykes or even the two Mr Hunts (John and David). Did they, I have asked myself in the past few weeks, have *nothing* to say about Mrs Thatcher's immigration interview – or, indeed, about her earlier economic outburst before a group of Glasgow businessmen in which she pledged 'the withdrawal of government from interference in wage bargaining'? Private beliefs are, no doubt, one thing; but politics is a public business. And there is little point in being 'a good German' if you are also content to be a silent one.

I have no wish to be unfair – and I do see their difficulty. Within the Tory Party there exists today a kind of 20th-century War of the Roses: doctrinal differences can all too easily threaten to look like dynastic claims. But, to be equally fair, Mr Heath did represent an approach to politics totally distinct from that of Mrs Thatcher. When Mr Enoch Powell first advocated a policy amounting to repatriation in 1969 Mr Heath immediately denounced it as 'an example of man's inhumanity to man . . . something quite intolerable in a Christian society': Mrs Thatcher, so far as I am aware, has not seen fit to offer a breath of criticism of an almost identical speech made by Mr Powell a fortnight ago.

All of which leads me to conclude that it is no coincidence that Mr Heath's most powerful supporter in the leadership election of 1965 happened to be Iain Macleod – or, indeed, that he can trace his bloodline in Tory politics all the way back to Rab Butler and Harold Macmillan. Mrs Thatcher belongs, by contrast, to a quite different strain (or, if I can risk the phrase, 'cultural background') – a strain or background only too sadly reflected in the type of people who comprise her closest political advisers. I once heard Lord Hailsham declare in a television studio that he did not believe a great party should be 'brought down by a liar, a whore and a pimp'. Nor in my view – and, I would hope also, in the view of the more respectable, if reticent, of today's Tories – should it place the revival of its fortunes in the hands of media experts, jugular journalists and jacks-of-the-public-relations-trade.

Of course, if Mrs Thatcher does win the election, even the Tory Party's current breed of silent dissidents will congratulate themselves on their discretion. But what if, even after Ilford, she eventually loses? Then, no doubt, there will be any number of Tory MPs eager to advertise what all along were their misgivings. Unless, however, they are prepared to display a little more evidence of their convictions in the next six months, they can hardly expect the outside world to regard theirs as having been a particularly credible, or even creditable, political performance.

Bernard D. Nossiter

Portugal's Last Chance But One

In the military barracks, the officers have cut their long hair and turned in dashing red bandanas for trim ties. At Tavares' elegant restaurant, chic ladies have abandoned revolutionary blue jeans for demure dresses and fur stoles. In the lobby of the National Assembly, the most democratic legislators now kiss the hands of female constituents and friends like the counts and marquises who ruled Portugal in the past. After one year of leftist political theatre and two more of sharply declining living standards, the Portuguese have had enough. They want order, security and a touch of the material prosperity that was promised in the first flush of the April 1974 coup. There is little doubt that the overwhelming majority, including the newly disciplined military officers, prefer democratic freedom to even the relatively mild repression of the Salazar-Caetano regime. But there is a limit to the price any people will pay for free speech, a free press and a freely elected legislature. In Portugal, those limits are being reached.

A wild orgy of wage and fringe benefit increases, an inevitable consequence of the inexperienced Workers' Commissions which took over plants after the 1974 coup, coupled with a frenzied rush for goods has sent inflation here to dizzying heights. Official figures put it as 21 per cent in 1976 and 27 per cent in 1977, but it was more like 30 per cent-plus in both years. Capital fled abroad. Imports were sucked in. The balance of payments deficit last year ran at $12,000m. For a US-sized economy that would mean a deficit five times as big as the one now troubling Washington.

Now the bills have come in. Austerity is the order of the day. Mario Soares, about as socialist as James Callaghan (but lacking Callaghan's political toughness), has had to turn to the more responsible of the two conservative parties, the Christian Democrats. With their support, Soares and his brilliant young finance minister, Victor Constancio, have worked up a plausible programme to tighten belts and lay the groundwork for a sound expansion.

It means cramped credit, high interest rates, cuts in subsidies and increases in prices for a wide range of nationalised goods and services. At an optimistic best it promises no change in a jobless rate officially put at 9 per cent and really standing at almost twice that level.

Conventional foreign opinion approves of this plan but warns that its success depends on the willingness of trade unions to co-operate with a measure of wage restraint. Here as in Italy, the communist trade union federation dominates organised labour. But, unlike Italy, there is no hint of independent Eurocommunism in Alvaro Cunhal.

Conventional foreign opinion can rest easily. The communist union leaders appear to be among the tamest tigers in town, an estimate shared by a broad spectrum of informed Portuguese opinion. Their stated aim is zero real wage increases in this critical year, wage gains that march hand in hand with price increases. Since the Communists themselves estimate that wages lagged behind prices by 9 per cent in 1976 and another 15 per cent last year, this is a remarkably modest goal.

Why? In their grim, grey waterfront headquarters, the communist union leaders explain that their primary concern is 'defending workers' and trade union rights', that they are acting 'in the national interest'. English translation: another reckless burst of inflation and payments deficit brings nearer the day when those officers come out of the barracks, this time to stage a right-wing takeover that will drive Communists, unionists and many more into exile or a new underground.

Theirs is not a unique view. From the pink suburban presidential palace of President Eanes to the lobby of the National Assembly, there is wide agreement on the likely course of events here. If Soares and his Christian Democrats fail, there will be one more chance. Eanes, a ramrod-stiff

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general whose incorruptible devotion to democracy is unquestioned, would then form a constitutional presidential regime. If it failed to right the economic disorder, the officers would take over. They would not restore the old order. It is dead. But they would impose a technocratic, authoritarian and managerial regime, ending the brief experiment with democracy. The domino effects on Spain, Italy and even Greece can only be guessed.

It still need not happen. On paper Finance Minister Constancio's plan should work – if he gets the $800m. in foreign loans promised by the US, Germany and others. The trouble is that these lenders are waiting for the International Monetary Fund to give a green light, to pronounce Portugal safe for lending. As usual, the IMF is demanding a set of stiff, wooden terms that Constancio thinks will bankrupt hundreds of small firms and drive a barely tolerable jobless level to impossible heights. When the IMF similarly threatened to wreck Britain's wage restraint 15 months ago, Henry Kissinger was made aware of the political consequences, overruled the hapless Treasury Secretary, William Simon, and got the Fund to relax its terms. But Portugal has not yet aroused any political concern in the West (probably because its Left and far Left is shattered) and so the duller economists in the US Treasury and at the Fund are riding high. If they succeed, it could illustrate the gag which holds that the IMF has toppled more Latin governments than Marx and Engels combined.

Apart from the IMF, the biggest threat to democracy here is the slackness and corruption that has overtaken the young democratic order. One minister is implicated in a coffee smuggling ring; another high official is caught smuggling arms, refrigerators and other consumer appliances; still another is found churning out fake dollars and marks on his own printing press. From top to bottom, feckless relatives are placed on government payrolls and high socialist officials find cushy berths with private firms 'persuaded' to lend a hand.

Soares dismisses all this as 'rumour without proof'. Portuguese corruption, he insists, is no worse than that in France, Italy or other countries. He forgets that Portgual is not other countries, that it is less than four years away from the coup that gave it democracy. The corruption phenomenon is so worrying that Eanes repeatedly calls attention to it, in public and private. Constancio felt compelled to mention it in his Assembly speech outlining the economic plan; to be sure, few legislators stayed to listen. They prefer the flowery vagueness of Soares and other old style politicians to hard and unpalatable economic and social fact.

Nobody is placing any firm bets on the outcome here. Democratic sentiment is strong but democracy must deliver the goods. As one thoughtful politician said: 'The officers will move when their wives tell them there is no food in the shops, nothing in the stores.' It was, after all, a coup of young captains, majors and commanders that gave Portugal its infant democracy, not a revolution. What the officers gave, it is well understood, the officers can also take away.

Lisbon

David Selbourne

Mrs Gandhi Rides Again

Three Congress faction bosses – Morarji Desai, Jagjivan Ram and Indira Gandhi – fought the March 1977 elections in India, the results of which brought the Emergency to an abrupt and unexpected end. All three headed separate parties for the occasion, two of them – Desai's Janata Party and Ram's Congress for Democracy – cobbled together to bring about a 'democratic restoration', but in the event serving as the political vehicles for Indira Gandhi's long-standing political rivals.

During the past week, once again, three Congress faction bosses – Morarji Desai (and friends), Brahmananda Reddy, and Indira Gandhi – returned to the hustings in state elections. This time it was the Janata Party, the 'Official Congress' and the 'Indira Congress' which were doing battle. The names of the parties might be different in this or that particular (Congress I for Congress R, for example, in Mrs Gandhi's case), but the name of the game – the politics of faction – was the same in substance.

Thus in Andhra Pradesh, the luckless electorate had to 'choose' between the poorly organised Janata Party, no less than 180 of whose 269 candidates were actually ex-Congress defectors, or wolves in sheeps' clothing; the candidates of the 'Official Congress', led by Brahmananda Reddy – an ex-cabinet colleague of Indira Gandhi – unconvincingly (and unsuccessfully) disowning their roles in the Emergency; and the candidates of the 'Indira Congress' led by Mrs Gandhi, who was once more promising her demagogic all to the 'poorer and weaker sections'. Mrs Gandhi had based her populist campaign (once again) on a pseudo-socialist platform for the defence of the interests of the masses, skilfully exploited the failures of the Janata Party's political and economic programme – the same as hers in most respects – brazenly denounced it for its tyrannical excesses, and had shrewdly chosen 75 per cent of her candidates in Andhra from the minorities and the lower castes and classes.

But beyond all this, the election results confirm what was already clear: that the Janata Party's writ does not run throughout India. That is, they confirm that, without a mass-base, an alternative national party to the Congress of the Nehrus cannot be constructed out of the disparate – and today perhaps desperate and divided – Janata constituents of Left, Right and Centre. Furthermore, with the Marxist Communist Party (CPM) in office in West Bengal and Tripura, the regionalist ADMK powerfully installed in Tamil Nadu, Mrs Gandhi's henchman Devaraj Urs, who bears the familiar Congress stigmata of serious charges of corruption on his forehead, returned in Karnatika, the Indira Congress victors in Andhra, and the Janata Party in command of much of Northern India and in Bombay and Delhi, a new period is undoubtedly beginning in the politics of modern India.

Certainly more important than the personal future of Mrs Gandhi is that the vicious concentration and abuse of power under one-party rule in the Emergency period (and earlier), has, in the months since it ended, given way to the complex expression of the political choices being made in different states of the Indian Union. The spectrum which these choices traverse could now hardly be wider. Moreover, the diversity of the present crop of election results gives a new and greater importance to the issue of centre/state relations – that is, the functioning of the Indian federal system; an issue which was forcibly raised, as a demand for greater state autonomy, by the cabinet of the Marxist-led, Left Front Government in West Bengal at the beginning of December.

Here, therefore, there is yet another focus of political authority – whose prestige and influence is being felt throughout North Eastern India – and one which, in the long term, may be more significant than all the rest put together. In particular, the politics of West Bengal provide an instructive example of the intensifying struggle to preserve or defeat, the old hegemony of Congress, and of the methods required on both sides to do it.

In West Bengal during the early 1970s there was an orgy of violence organised from Delhi. Carried out by police and Congress Party hoodlums – as has been widely documented by Amnesty International, among others – no less than 1,100 party workers and members of the CPM, which led the minority government were

THE NEW STATESMAN

The Board of the New Statesman has appointed Bruce Page to be the editor in succession to Anthony Howard. Mr Page will take up the appointment and also join the Board on 1st April.

Bruce Page was born in London in 1936 and moved to Australia as a schoolboy. He started his career in journalism in Melbourne and when he returned to England in 1960 worked in succession for the *Evening Standard*, the *Daily Herald* and then for 12 years for the *Sunday Times* where he became a managing editor.

Since 1976 he has been freelancing with the exception of a six-month period on the *Daily Express*. He has written, with a number of co-authors, books about espionage *(Philby)*, US politics *(An American Melodrama)*, financial speculation *(Do You Sincerely Want to be Rich?)*, aviation, warfare, drug research and law. He has been an occasional contributor to the NEW STATESMAN since 1972.

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murdered. Nonetheless, the West Bengal electorate was persistent. In the wake of Mrs Gandhi's immediate post-Emergency débâcle, the CPM came back to the Writers' Building (as the state government building is known) in Calcutta in June 1977.

A coalition of socialist parties – the Left Front – led by the CPM gained an absolute majority, taking 230 of the 294 seats in the West Bengal Assembly, of which the CPM's share was 177. The CPM polled 35.9 per cent of the popular vote, nearly double that which it gained in the elections of the late 1960s, before its violent removal from office by the Congress Party. As for the Janata Party, it contested 293 seats, winning 29, and losing 118 deposits, thus faring substantially worse then than it did this week. Congress Party, before the breakaway Indira Congress was formed, fought 292 and won a meagre 20. The pro-Soviet CPI, Mrs Gandhi's Emergency bedfellow, with 2.52 per cent of the popular vote, won the princely total of two seats in the new Assembly.

So that while the Janata Party struggles to consolidate its position at the centre the Official Congress licks its wounds throughout India, and Mrs Gandhi's political circus takes to the road again, the CPM is grappling with its own political dilemmas of parliamentarism and electoral 'power', and with the question of 'revisionism' and revolution. It finds itself presiding, as a Communist Party, over a state of 45 million people – comparable in size with the nation states of Europe – which is one of the two main centres of monopoly capital in India. No less than 20 per cent of India's gross output comes from West Bengal; while 40 per cent of India's exports and 25 per cent of its imports pass through the port of Calcutta. Roughly 90 per cent of India's jute – the country's highest export earner – a quarter of its steel, a third of its coal, and half its railway equipment are of West Bengal production.

Today, in addition to all the other problems facing Janata, West Bengal has begun to set a dangerous example to the Government in Delhi, handicapped as it is by its incoherent prospectus, and inadequate political organisation. It is also a provocative communist example – instructive for those waiting 'Eurocommunism's' arrival in power, and its aftermath – of efficient government without jobbery, of a struggle to implement basic land reforms by legal methods, and of the maintenance of order without repression. For these are features which would normally invite its removal by the guardians of 'democratic' and 'liberal' values. But what stops the Janata Government – as it did not stop Congress in the early 1970s – is, among other things, that it is not in a strong enough political position to do it.

The central Government in the last weeks has been put under embarrassing political and moral pressure from Calcutta. Thus, in order to protect the rights of the 3 million poor sharecroppers, the West Bengal Assembly, on 29 September last, adopted the West Bengal Land Reforms (Amendment) Bill, 1977. The Congress and Janata Party members, revealingly, walked out in protest. The Bill – now Act – makes it an offence for landlords arbitrarily to terminate the rights of sharecroppers to cultivation, and provides, *inter alia*, that the latter be given receipts for their lawful share of the produce of their own labour. It seeks to remedy a situation in which landlord reprisal, violence and eviction have traditionally greeted the reassertion of the pitifully minimal rights of those who till the land, against those who own it. It was a Bill which, under the Constitution required Presidential approval from the centre, which itself has no effective policy for land reform. Assent was unprecedentedly delayed for four months; and by the time it was finally given, the winter harvest conveniently was over.

But not before there had been other kinds of harvest also, which should perhaps have forewarned us of this week's events. An obvious, though minor one, was the New Year landslide election result in the hill-state of Tripura, West Bengal's neighbour. It brought the CPM into government there with an overwhelming 63.6 per cent of the popular vote, almost twice as much as its rivals – including Congress (17 per cent), Janata (8 per cent) and the CPI (less than 1 per cent) put together.

Now these developments in 'Red Bengal' have a distinct resonance, like the rural uprisings of the early 1970s, of another future for India. It is a future distinct both from that offered by the anti-socialism of most of the Janata Party's leaders, and the pseudo-socialism implicit in any revival of the Congress of Indira. It is not, however, clearcut. For an all-India communist movement does not exist. Instead, there is polemic and debate, open and private, between the CPI and the CPM and the CPM-L; historical hostility, a desire for rapprochement in many of their rank-and-file members, and justified political suspicions. An uneasy combination.

The point of departure and reference for this particular complexity is West Bengal. In addition, in West Bengal there is presented in concentrated form every ambiguity, every dilemma, every struggle of a Communist Party presiding in elected office (but without a revolutionary crisis) over a world made by the capitalist and the landlord. It is the same no-man's-land into which the PCI, and perhaps the PCF, is heading in Europe. Capital and land cannot be confiscated without force and disorder; but neither can the interests of the masses, who elected the West Bengal government and who expected an end to their deprivations, be advanced beyond narrow limits without it. Yet 'law and order' must be maintained, and investment encouraged; but whose law and whose order? And how can genuine economic redistribution and social justice be achieved, when the enemies of both are so quick to foment violence?

All this produces classically in West Bengal, and within a world of structured exploitation and injustice, a politics of the slow extension of basic democratic rights, and the institution (for the first time, in many cases) of an uncorrupt order. It means a practice of basic welfare relief for the poorest, as well as the consolidation by the CPM of its electoral gains among the Calcutta middle class and intelligentsia. It means both building up its own mass organisations, and 'setting an example' to the rest of India. It means establishing the ideological basis of yet another alternative national party, as well as engaging in a local propaganda battle, in which capital's interests, dominating the media, confront and oppose the interests of the communist movement. It means, in West Bengal's case, continuous protest at the limitations placed upon states' rights under the Indian Constitution. But, above all, in my mind's eye, it means a memory, far removed from the world of the wheeling and dealing of Congress.

The big crowd of jute workers, exhausted by labour, had gathered in thousands at Titagarh, near Calcutta, to listen to a speech by the CPM's Minister of Transport Mohammed Amin, himself from the age of 13 a jute worker, and his father and mother also. He spoke beneath the prison-fortress walls of the huge Khardar jute mill. It was Christmas nightfall, cold and cheerless, the attentive crowd silent. 'The ruling class', he was saying, 'have exploited West Bengal. They have plundered it. And you, the workers, make everything. But what have you to show for it?'

The crowd stood on the dusty ground, beneath the concrete water-tower and the black chimneys, the hammer-and-sickle hanging limp from a lamp standard. In its dim light, the mosquitoes were swarming. 'You have elected me,' he said, 'but we do not have real power. We have no control over the centre, and we cannot control the market. It is the capitalist system which is responsible for all your problems. We know that it is only mass action which can smash it. Even to protect the basic rights of the people, we must fight the political obstacles at the centre. This we are doing. When you go to sleep tonight, and lie on your beds, you must think over what the CPM is saying. If there is any other way, tell us.'

It was a Bengal winter night; cold and dusty. Few of the audience had warm clothing. The houses of the jute workers were hovels, the poverty catastrophic. 'The same clothes,' they said, 'which we use in the mill, we wear to go about, and to sleep in also. We cannot talk about good food, eggs, milk or fruit. We get wages for survival. When we wash our clothes, until they dry out, we must wait for them. We live in debt, and die in debt also.'

And there are other voices to be heard, echoes of the raucous clamour from the hustings, as the West Bengal Government sets to its task of reform, relief, protest and organisation. They are the voices of the first 'destabilisers' – the Janata Party's leader in West Bengal, P. C. Sen, prominent among them. They complain, ominously, of 'indiscipline' and the 'breakdown of law and order', for which there is no evidence whatsoever. But the truth in such matters has never been a deterrent. And even the truth is itself a problem, for when the managing director of a multinational company in Calcutta, on the contrary, asserted to me that the CPM was 'disciplined', and 'doing a very good job with law and order', and the CITU was 'trustworthy right down to the shop-floor level', he unconsciously revealed how in every such approval by capital lies a new and acute dilemma for the party of labour. But, for the moment, it is a dilemma dwarfed by those facing the Janata Party. For the Government in Calcutta now seems likely to outlive the one in Delhi.

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Roy Strong*

In Defence of the V & A

Lady Sneerwell: The paragraphs, you say, Mr Snake, were all inserted?
Snake. They were, madam; and, as I copied them myself in a feigned hand, there can be no suspicion whence they came.

It was this celebrated exchange, opening one of the greatest of our English comedies, Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, which sprang to mind as I read Stephen Games's article on the Victoria & Albert Museum entitled 'Problems of a Strong Personality' (NS 17 February). The exhumation of Mark Boxer's endearing cartoon of me (now in my downstairs loo) five years ago boded ill. Even the art work was out of date. Hadn't they noticed that my moustaches now went up instead of drooping downwards? This immediately suggested a certain lack of respect for accuracy of observation, a suggestion which was to become even more patently obvious in the text of the article. It would fill too many columns to put right all the innuendoes, all the misinterpretations, all the downright inaccuracies. Whatever Mr Games's talents may be, he is certainly not destined to occupy a place in Jane Austen's pantheon as a 'man of information'.

It is less a case, in the words of a graffito outside my former gallery, of 'What's wrong with Strong', than what's the problem at the V & A. So much has been written and in such a muddled way that I propose to start with solid fact. The dilemma of the V & A has never been one of money, but one of staff. We have never been starved of funds thanks to the DES but it is what those funds can or cannot be used for that divides us (among other things) from the trustee national art museums. Even if the Lilac Fairy endowed us with all the future revenues from North Sea Oil it would make not one iota of difference to the staff position at the V & A. It would still be shut on Fridays, the regional exhibitions would continue to lie defunct, galleries would continue to be closed, services would remain stretched and curtailed. What has occurred can only be described as a weird stroke of fate born of an accident of history, the blame for which can be attached to nobody. Prince Albert in 1853 could never have foreseen that some 120 years later a praiseworthy decision by government to reduce the size of the civil service would, as it made its way down the lines of Government, be catastrophic for his treasure house. If he could have done so, he might well have constituted it differently. And there is the nub of the devolution issue. Should the V & A continue to be part of government or should it be reconstituted on new lines to ensure independence of manoeuvre similar to that enjoyed by the other national museums and galleries?

Mr Games thinks not, as he apparently knows (no one else does) that 'the staff of the V & A are very happy with their position within the DES'. How does he know this and what is his evidence? First, he alleges that Hugh Jenkins asked the staff at all levels whether they wanted to come under a board of trustees, to which they replied no. As far as the administration of the V & A is concerned there is not a shred of truth in this statement; not a letter or a line on the subject can be traced. Secondly, he cites the letter from the civil service unions, the IPCS, the FDA and the CSU to *The Times*. It is widely publicly known that many of the staff were incensed over the contents of that letter, about which they had not been told or consulted, so they drafted their own letter to *The Times*, dissociating themselves from it. As civil servants they were, as Mrs Williams stated in a written reply in the House, forbidden to send it. So much for Mr Games's information. The truth of the matter is no one knows what the staff's reaction to a change of governance would be because, until the Secretary of State pronounces, there is nothing to discuss. The unions within the V & A have since wisely decided to make no comment on that issue either way until such proposals, if any, are made.

If Mr Games also really believes that I am cheerfully shutting up galleries to achieve whatever end he attributes to me, I challenge him to walk the ground with me within the museum. Even before the cuts came, the Exhibition Road entrance was closed for lack of staff – caused by additional security problems. How can he cite the figures of over a 1,000 staff for the British Museum and 400 less for the V & A, which is as large with four branches, and still believe that we can remain open? Such decisions are not reached in an arbitrary way. Guidance in these affairs ultimately lies with the Security Officer of the entire national collections. Lucky Miss Weston with her printing presses and fire engines over in the Science Museum, even though she has publicly admitted (contrary to Mr Games's statement) that she will start closing galleries in rota soon. Our nightmare is of labyrinthine galleries jam-packed with thousands of showcases stuffed with jewels, ivories, ceramics, silver, myriads of priceless and less priceless but highly marketable antiques. Of course we gave prolonged consideration to the warders' proposal for keeping the whole place open, as they well know. What director wants to close? It was a scheme in the true spirit of our men, well-intentioned and bred of a devotion to the public, but as it took no account of absence through sickness and failed to meet security standards, we had no option but to seek another solution.

How can he ever say that the unions 'are also cross that, while the closure of the 130-year-old regional services department was intended to make other lay-offs unnecessary, it has turned out that this cut is just one of many'? It always was. There was never any secret about it. The closure of our service to the regions only ever accounted for 23 out of a total 81 losses and *everyone* was told of the whole package from the start. And that start could not have been more public. It began with a speech by myself to my assembled colleagues in the Raphael Cartoon Court on 2 November 1976, copies of which were immediately available for everyone.

Perhaps of all the comments amidst this malicious miasma the one which is really unforgivable is that which reads as follows: 'Dr Strong grossly insulted his staff by announcing that the fate of the V & A was in the public's hands.' Who does Mr Games think a museum serves: its staff, its unions, its director, its advisory council? No, a million times no. Contrary to his soul-destroying notion of what a national museum is about, I happen to know that the staff are proud that they serve the public. For nearly a century and a half the V & A has given tirelessly and unceasingly to young and old, to rich and poor, to the infirm and the handicapped, to the scholar and the antiquarian, to the school child and the university student, to the artist and the craftsman. The V & A belongs to them, those people whom we serve and whose taxes maintain us, our building and its contents.

So the exhibition programme is money 'frittered on attention-seeking publicity gimmicks' while 'basic repairs and restoration' are left undone. Do not Mr Games and his informants even know the rudiments of museum funding? The two for a start are separate immovable votes, one a museum vote, the other DoE. It might, however, interest him to learn that not only has the V & A's building programme been preserved intact, including a new wing, a new store and the Theatre Museum, but this regime has embarked on putting in order the whole 12-acre roof which is about to collapse. As for exhibitions, how dare Mr Games 'grossly insult', to use his favourite words, the staff who conceived, researched, designed and set up such exhibitions as Jade, Fabergé, Liberty, The Makers, The Destruction of the Country House, Minton, the American Bicentennial, to name but a few of our widely acclaimed shows.

*Roy Strong is director of the Victoria & Albert Museum.

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Would Mr Bevis Hillier, the single source he glibly quotes, put the exhibition he was commissioned to do for the V & A on the Festival of Britain into the category of 'rather too much of a giggle'? I wonder.

Our corporate success is too much for Mr Games to bear and must be explained away. The glamour of the V & A is the result, he tells us, of 'a superficial appeal for publicity' and 'heavily advertised ventures'. Is he mad? The V & A's total annual publicity budget is £21,000. Well over £100,000 is spent on any one spectacular such as 1776 at Greenwich or the Chinese at the Royal Academy. Publicity is part of the machinery of a modern museum. It is a tribute to the staff that minus funds but with a million ideas we sparkle and shine.

Yes, Mr Games and allies, that last sentence might surprise you. The staff are not, as you believe, a chorus of extras. They are brilliant, idiosyncratic, enthusiastic, scholarly, affectionate and often utterly maddening people (and I am sure that they think the same about me). Everyone who is any good in the arts is difficult and unconventional. In setting fire to that quality lies the essence of good direction. That is what gives the V & A its particular vitality, its dynamism. And when in its history was there more dialogue? Never. The old days of autocracy are gone, and through the museum stretches a network of committees and channels of communication. Perhaps that new freedom is a weakness, because information before withheld is now available and through that is open to being twisted, distorted and abused, as Mr Games knows only too well.

And who are these tin gods of tittle tattle, these oily Iagos that spread falsehood and bend fact? What are their motives? Is it the good of the museum and its service to the public? There seems to be no shred of evidence to believe so. Is it an attempt to bring a disastrous regime to its end? If so, Mr Games and his allies destroy themselves by the few true facts that they include in the article. 1977 saw attendance figures up from 1.5 million to 2.3 million and exhibitions netted £345,000. The museum, he admits, is 'a far more lively place than previously'. Need anything more really be said?

Donald Gould

Doctors as Gods

Who does Dr Seymour Jamie Gerald Spencer think he is? God Almighty? I am moved to ask this quesion in the light of his astounding interference with the private and personal affairs of two of his patients as reported in last Friday's *Guardian*.

It seems that a Lieutenant-Commander Thomas Crookes, aged 56, and a Mrs Phyllis Hammond, aged 63, had decided to get married at the Oxford registrar's office. The necessary notice had been posted but the day before the wedding was to have taken place Dr Spencer objected. He did so on the grounds that the couple were mentally ill, and therefore unfitted for each other or the married state. The registrar thereupon cancelled the ceremony. This alarming decision is now being reviewed by the Registrar-General, and if he upholds his underling the shaken and unhappy lovers intend to appeal to the high court. In the meantime they remain thwarted, and denied a fundamental right.

I had, in my innocence, imagined that the causes and just impediments why two persons should not be joined together in holy matrimony were few and well defined, entailing only circumstances which would make a proposed marriage illegal, such as one partner being already espoused, or one or both being under-aged, and lacking the consent of parents or a court. But if the registrar was right to accept Dr Spencer's objection, then it would seem that anybody can sabotage a wedding simply because they think the union would be a disaster.

The Lieutenant-Commander is said by the doctor to be suffering from hypomania, which is a term used by psychiatrists to describe a state well short of wild and violent lunacy, but characterised by spells of excitement and elation of a kind that would certainly raise eyebrows in, say, the library of the Athenaeum. Many highly successful eccentrics could justly be labelled hypomanic, but they happen to have found a slot in life where their behaviour is applauded and rewarded, rather than being regarded as a cause for concern. While not naming Mrs Hammond's illness, Dr Spencer claims (according to the *Guardian*) that she suffers from a personality disorder which prevents her from recognising the abnormality in her betrothed. The Lieutenant-Commander's GP is said to have signed a statement denying that the couple are unfit to wed.

Now, it would be an arrogant folly for somebody like me to assume, merely on the basis of a newspaper report, that Dr Spencer is wrong in believing that a marriage between his two patients would only compound their troubles, and would be thoroughly ill-advised. There are, unfortunately, too many self-important, doctrinaire, and insufficiently skilled practitioners in the psychiatric trade, but Dr Spencer is not one of them. He is a highly qualified and experienced consultant, and a lecturer in his subject at the University of Oxford. It would be sensible to suppose, therefore, that he had ample reason to fear that Lieutenant-Commander Crookes and Mrs Hammond were heading for trouble. But does he have a duty, or any right, to do more than counsel and advise? Is he not, in using force and wielding the big stick, acting well outside the proper role of the doctor in society.

The Mental Health Act does give psychiatrists what is, effectively, an untrammelled power over the liberty and activities of patients who are compulsorily detained in mental hospitals because they have been judged a danger either to themselves or others. Many people feel that the present law is far too careless of the rights of even such unfortunates. But the Oxford couple are not in that category. They were both, at one time, voluntary patients at the Warneford psychiatric hospital where Dr Spencer works, and that is where they met. They are now under his care as out-patients – a fact which argues that they are (perhaps with some psychiatric support) fully capable of managing their own daily lives. They should also be free, like the rest of us, to risk making their own mistakes.

But Dr Spencer's action is of more than local and passing interest. It is a reminder of the manner in which all kinds of experts are increasingly claiming the right to interfere with traditional liberties for the supposedly greater good of society as a whole, or of the individuals whose affairs they wish to control.

There is, for example, a fear which has been expressed by such knowledgeable and level-headed men as Sir Julian Huxley and Professor Joshua Lederberg (of Stanford University) that the human gene pool is deteriorating. The argument is that modern medicine, and, even more powerfully, such factors as improved housing and nutrition and widely available social services, are allowing genetically weak and inferior individuals, who in times not long past would have perished young, to survive and breed and propagate their stock. This, it is claimed, must eventually lead to a degeneration of the entire race.

Some drastic remedies have been proposed, and others have been put into effect. In Denmark the law requires the sterilisation of all women found to have an intelligence quotient of less than 75, and over the past 25 years around 100,000 mentally deficient citizens of North Carolina have been sterilised. Not long ago the state legislature of Illinois considered a proposal, drafted by the Chicago Bar Association, that marriage licences should be witheld from couples liable to give birth to defective infants. Who was to decide which candidates for marriage were unsuitable, and what criteria should be used, was not made clear, and, happily, the idea was eventually abandoned on grounds of vagueness.

Mongolism affects about one in every 600 babies born, and the risk of bearing a mongol child rises sharply with the age of the mother. The journal *Theological Studies* recently suggested that, in order to reduce the incidence of mongol births, and other congenital defects which become more common with maternal age, childbearing in women over 35 should be proscribed.

Lieutenant-Commander Crookes and Mrs Hammond would not, if they married, have any children, let alone defective ones, so Dr Spencer's interference with their plans seems wholly without merit. And it is frightening as a demonstration of the manner in which well-intentioned experts will blithely sacrifice the rights and feelings of others in the course of achieving what *they* consider to be the proper solution to a human problem.

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Jeremy Bugler

Railroading the NUR

Short on brotherly love and long on truculence is a fair way to describe relations between the nation's transport unions this year. People are getting very touchy indeed. Sid Weighell, general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, says publicly it would be easier for his lads to get on with Chinese railwaymen than the other rail unions, and then he punchily encapsulates the NUR's feelings about ASLEF: 'My union will not be kicked about by a cabful of engine drivers.' Even if this week they weren't, elsewhere Sid Weighell is showing signs of breaking long-standing and unwritten law about transport labour: lorry drivers may gain employment at the expense of railmen, but never, ever, shall the reverse take place. Sid Weighell is in the middle of a correspondence, so far fruitless, with Jack Jones of the TGWU, about evidence that the T&G's lorry drivers and dockers have been threatening to black various firms who want to convey their goods by rail, switching from road.

A long list of firms allegedly blacked or threatened with a good blacking if they switched to rail has been collected in a confidential paper of the Labour Party's transport sub-committee. The firms named run from big brewers, bakers, bicycle-makers and the major car firms. New instances are still coming forward. Last year, for example, Tunnel Cement at Bangor in North Wales built a private rail siding at a cost of £150,000, half of which was paid by a government grant. Lorry drivers, T&G members, have put pressure on the company so that the line is very little used, according to an excellent BBC *Tonight* programme.

By far the most highly coloured contests, though, have taken place at Didcot, where a new distribution centre has been built (and now abandoned to store tobacco). Since 1974 only two trains have left Cowley with cars for Didcot although British Leyland would like to have used the line regularly. One train got through in January only with the consent of the T&G in Oxford and after a curious incident in which a van was found parked across the rails. The second train was turned back by T&G stewards at Didcot, and the cars it was carrying arrived later – by road.

The T&G stewards may be said to be doing their duty by their members: one guess is that each train that takes cars from Cowley would do the work of 20 lorry drivers, and so threaten their jobs. By the same token, dockers at Southampton who effectively closed Didcot as an inland port by threatening forwarding agents with blacking in all ports of Britain were also protecting their livelihoods. But there are two problems about this self-defence. One is simply that the rail unions have suffered a grievous haemorrhage of jobs over the last two decades, falling from 600,000 (pre-Beeching) to some 240,000 today. Many rail drivers look to getting a better share of rail freight (and some forms, bulk loads especially, go better by rail) to preserve *their* jobs. Sid Weighell believes his men have done more than their share of bleeding. Railmen cannot turn to other firms for railwork, whereas a demand exists for lorry drivers (though not always at the £100-£150 a week the Cowley car-transporters earn).

The tablets of Labour Party policy contain the second problem about the lorry-drivers of the T&G. The last two party conferences have carried overwhelmingly motions calling for freight to be shifted from road to rail, where suitable. The T&G has voted against, Jack Jones has spoken against (even moving a motion to turn rail lines into roads) but they've lost.

Jack Jones plainly has no patience at all with this item of party principle. It can be said to enrage him, along with any attempt to make road users pay more. A year ago, Jack Jones protested to Ron Hayward, Labour's general secretary, because the home policy committee suggested raising petrol tax to the point where it would pay for the full cost of car travel: 'When will the special committees of the party try to avoid interfering with the livelihood of members of unions, such as my own?'

Accusations that his union has been threatening firms considering rail freight raise him, apparently, to a higher pitch of anger. In the autumn, Labour's transport sub-committee tried to go through the gamut of the charges against the T&G, over the Didcot trouble in particular. Jack Jones with T&G colleagues Jack Ashwell and Bob Harrison were invited along. Ron Atkins, MP for Preston North, was the intrepid member who took up the issue with Jones, and there followed a meeting with scenes the like of which have not been seen since *Bill Brand* was on television. 'Lies and tittle-tattle' was one description accorded to the charges against the T&G. Atkins says he told Jack Jones that it was no good trying to shout him down. In the interests of the Labour movement, he'd been examining the evidence. 'Lies' shouted Jack Jones.

Even the minutes of this bizarre meeting record that members complained of the 'air of intimidation' at the meeting. Jones is reported to have said: 'My members' money is invested in the Labour Party. They don't and will not accept this sort of attack on them.' Jack Jones finally asked for the confidential paper about T&G threats to be 'destroyed'. Rather tamely, the shattered members agreed to let it 'lie on the table'. Later Jack Jones explained his action by saying that the transport sub-committee 'has no standing in the party' and 'some statements were made which I said were out of order . . .' Members of the committee 'has no standing in the party' at the notion of a guest ruling on what is or is not in order, and perhaps this is why the issue has re-appeared on the agenda of the committee meeting later this month.

The form-book does not give any grounds for expecting this sub-committee to do anything purposeful. What is interesting is that the same paralysis is affecting William Rodgers and John Horam at the Department of Transport. Rodgers has repeatedly refused to have anything to do with the issue of rail freight getting blacked. The Didcot contretemps, he told Parliament last month, was only a port's dispute about containers being introduced. He could say this only by ignoring the T&G's block on Didcot trains to take the cars from Cowley. Rodgers had refused demands for an inquiry, saying the troubles will best be solved by the unions concerned.

T&G issues apart, Rodgers is showing many signs of pleasing the Labour faithful. He has pinned his colours to public transport, deciding to allocate worthy sums – running this year to £150m. – to keeping bus services going. He has thrown off the old complaint about making-the-railways-pay, saying boldly that 'The Government has decided to maintain a national network of railways. It recognises . . . that this will involve a substantial subsidy as long ahead as we can see.' All this is a welcome change from the ambivalent statements of Ministers a little while back.

Yet it is possible that Rodgers has miscalculated by trying to shelve the issue of rail freight blacking. Frank Patterson, British Rail's chief freight manager, puts it this way: 'There is a danger the rail unions will start the same practices. They've gone through a tremendous amount of change in the last ten years. The numbers of railways staff has reduced by about 30,000 in the last seven years and they've done it as responsibly as one can expect in a situation like that. Now, if they started reciprocating that would be a very, very bad day for the country.' In short, if the railwaymen throw off their old fatalism about employment, the transport unions – and transport – could be involved in a very unfraternal carve-up.

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James Taylor *

Parliament and the BSC

Last week the House of Commons Select Committee on Nationalised Industries issued its third report in six weeks on the British Steel Corporation. The committee confirms that it was misinformed about the BSC's finances, and in effect dismisses much of the information that it received – and which the House received in according augmented financial powers to the BSC – as casual, damaging nonsense. Admittedly, I know of only one instance which appears to me to have been total misrepresentation of a current or historical situation: when the BSC told the committee's advisers at a formally arranged meeting to discuss their forecasts, in May 1977, that they had no other figures than those furnished to the committee in October 1976 on the BSC's expected cash-flows. They now confirm that they *did* have such figures before May 1977. But for people who will say practically anything that comes into their heads (as often for want of better information as out of an intention to deceive) 'misinformation' to such lowly bodies as committee advisers is a venial sin well deserving of an Indulgence, and these have been around Westminster for a long time.

On 13 December 1476 William Caxton issued an Indulgence at the Almonry at Westminster for Abbot Sant – the first printed text known in Britain. Half a millennium later, on 15 December 1976, but only a couple of hundred yards away, the Select Committee on Nationalised Industries was the bemused recipient of some print-outs from (what I believe to be) the first computer programmes written for the House of Commons. One of these pieces of computery was a sceptical analysis of the same financial forecasts furnished to the committee in the preceding October by the British Steel Corporation: an analysis which, if read, could have been taken as a storm warning. Anyone noticing the committee's indignation over the past couple of months about how they had been taken by surprise by the BSC's overt financial collapse in the summer of 1977, could be pardoned for assuming that this warning nine months earlier (and its more detailed follow-ups produced later by the same computers) did in fact go unheeded.

Maybe, though, some at least of this small group of MPs had their premonitions – indeed their own record of pressing the BSC's previous chairman, Sir Monty Finniston, with sceptical questions six months earlier (in July 1976) shows that they had clear doubts which were not subsequently to be allayed about the BSC Eldorado which was promised them.

More importantly, the Select Committee could usefully be reminded that its own account of the task which it had set itself in early 1976 is inconsistent even in its own terms:

> Your Committee set itself the task of examining . . . the controlling and influencing factors external to the Corporation. The main external factors were taken to be the Government, the European Coal and Steel Community, the unions, competition, supplies and the market.
> [First Report, 9 November 1977, para. 4.]

This is to be compared with

> Select Committee on Nationalised Industries, Sub-Committee 'B's terms of reference are: To examine and report upon:
> . . .
> the controlling and influencing factors external to the Corporation,
> . . . The main external factors are taken to be *Parliament*, Government, Departments of State, etc.
> [Press Notice, 9 March 1976 – my italics.]

For the voter, if not for MPs, the inference is clear: no other agent than *Parliament* was responsible for creating so unviable an enterprise as the BSC back in 1967 – and Parliament ever since has consistently failed to match up to its own responsibilities.

Part of the recipe for disaster was to create, through ill-considered merging of 14 companies, a disorganisation which is objectively unmanageable: more people, more products, more establishments, and fewer managers with experience appropriate to the scale of the organisation, than any other steel company in the world outside the Soviet Union. The obvious conclusion to draw, which for some reason still seems unmentionable, by the committee, is to split up the BSC into four or five more manageable organisations, run by proper boards of experienced steelmakers (whether 'managers' or 'workers' or both), directly and fully responsible to its financiers. There is no evidence that anyone outside Grosvenor Place actually wants to be part of the still-born dinosaur that Parliament has imposed on the voter and taxpayer, nor any evidence that anyone outside SW1 derives any benefit from the unions' and the departments' predilection for centralising the 'decision-making' (for want of a better word).

If the sub-committee seriously believes that the Board of the BSC, as at present constituted and overtly proposed, should contain only four executive members, of whom only one is an experienced steelmaker, it would be appropriate that voters and taxpayers hear the reasons for their view. The BSC has had three executive chairmen, none with any visible qualification to run a major steel company, and it is impossible, however well-qualified these gentlemen may have been at their former vocations (two bankers and a research manager), to dissociate their lack of visibly appropriate experience from the damage which their decisions have visibly done. The sub-committee had the privilege of meeting experienced steelmakers running major steel companies in a number of countries: it also had the privilege of meeting experienced steelmakers running divisions of the BSC, but, with one exception, not on the main board and consequently not in the main driving seat. If the sub-committee condones this inferiority in board composition because it believes that the industrial and financial success of the BSC vindicates a process of eliminating almost all appropriate experience from the executive section of the BSC's board, it too owes taxpayers and voters its reasons for doing so.

It would also be fair to the future taxpayer to warn him here and now, that the sub-committee's recommendations are designed to diminish losses while achieving a reasonable degree of modernisation (if indeed this is the case): and fairer still to spell out clearly, if necessary with some rough calculations, that there is no ground for foreseeing the BSC as anything other than a drain on public expenditure for a generation to come. For ten years the taxpayer (and for 18 months the sub-committee) has been satiated with implausible forecasts of future 'profits' to compensate for current expenditures: it would be healthy and desirable if the financial facts of life were now fully spelt out. The sub-committee rightly condemned the contemptuous way in which it had been fed vapid nonsense in place of a sensible financial justification of the BSC's heavy expenditure. But when at last its concern was aroused by inescapable evidence (which, when previously forecast, left it mute if not deaf) it confined its complaints to the way in which it had been post hoc misinformed; these complaints were well justified, and its indignation does it credit; but these are not enough if it fails to spell out what the taxpayer can expect in the future.

It fell short in a failure to recognise three things. First, that it can do nothing to change the short-term situation. Secondly, that the situation on which it was misinformed is one directly ascribable to Parliament, and finally that the only remedies which Parliament can decide are long-term remedies. Parliament passed the statute setting up the BSC and Parliament should change it.

So legislation – Parliament's main form of decision – is urgent and overdue: if the BSC is created and 'regulated' by an Act, and the BSC is a failure, the principal blame must attach to that Act. The Select Committee on Nationalised Industries has studied the BSC for two years, and consequently is the sole organ of Parliament in a position to make positive proposals. Alas, so far, it appears to have seen its job as chronicling disaster rather than preventing its perpetuation.

**James Taylor was a specialist adviser to sub-committee 'B' of the Select Committee on Nationalised Industries for its investigations into the British Steel Corporation.*

NEW STATESMAN INDEX
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GETTING AND SPENDING – 1

Mary Morgan

Comfortably Off?

For the middle classes it is no longer the case, as the French once had it, that to choose is to be. Inflation and the egalitarian drive of our incomes policy govern not only earning and spending but their personal view of themselves. *Choisir est l'être* used to have to do with soul; now it has to do with how and where you manage to exist.

Jane Norton, for example, is a beautiful woman of 40, unmarried, the only child of a stockbroker, a graduate working in medical research. You would assume that she would be enjoying the secure charm of bourgeois life. Yet how and where did I find her? Struggling to buy a two-room flat in the East End of London. 'All right,' you say, 'she's only got herself to spend her £4,600 a year on'. Or, more sourly: 'Well, Daddy will see her right.' Or again 'There are many more to worry about than the Jane Nortons of this world.' So what's her problem?

It is very simple. It comes from trying to buy a home on a single wage. She did not particularly want to; she was quite content with her life in a bed-sitter in Islington, sharing kitchen and bathroom. It was unfurnished. But when the owner, a friend, sold up a year ago her only option was a year's wait on the housing list for a flat in an interwar estate. By and large they are not places anybody would grab the chance of living in. 'I was so depressed by the thought of vandalism, break-ins, of being dumped' she says, 'and I felt it was either now or never to get a place of my own or go on living in one room perhaps for the rest of my life.'

Prices and rates forced her East, not unwillingly, for she nursed no aspirations to classier areas, to a first floor flat (safe) in a looming, grey, Victorian house in Hackney. For £10,800 she got two big rooms, a wide balcony overlooking trees at the back, kitchen and shower.

The house-in-the-country upbringing insinuates itself immediately you enter the sitting room. The gleaming elegance of the Georgian dresser, dining chairs, linen press, silver candle-sticks is dominating: the rest goes unnoticed. Even there though, on second thoughts, the grey velvet sofa and chairs bought for £45 in Peckham, the half-price, off-cut red carpet from Camberwell – do they evidence another stereotype attribute of gentility fallen on hard times, capably making short ends meet?

She needs the talent. After what it costs her to live in these rooms, Jane has £20 a week left in her pocket. How does she spend it? Since she became a mortgagee she has found it necessary to keep a record of every penny; where she goes, what it costs. What determines the spending pattern most is the fact that she lives alone. She is lively, gregarious and has many friends but 'if I want company I have to buy it'.

Take food. Every Saturday she buys one loaf of bread, half a pound of butter, 1 lb cheese, the cheapest vegetables, potatoes, carrots, onions, white cabbage, yoghurt and pulses. She buys no tinned food, coffee only by the quarter if she can find it cheaper in a Greek shop. This lasts the week. The day of our meeting she had breakfasted on a slice of bread (marmalade is out) and tea. For both lunch and supper she had eaten potatoes and coleslaw. Once a week she buys meat – to share with a guest. 'I spend money on food only when I am sharing it with someone. It's where I make the biggest economy and, thank God, I don't care what I eat.' Luckily for her friends, for through such stringencies she manages to have people to supper at least once a fortnight; she is an exceptional cook – increasingly a vegetarian cook.

Total Salary	£4,636
Tax	£840
Nat. Ins.	£264
Superannuation	£276
Net Salary	£3,256
Flat	£1,776
Fuel	£204
Bank loan for flat	£144
Clothes	£150
Food	£364
H.P.	£132
Committed Outgoings	£2,770
Everything else	£486

It is a fact of life that friends like a drink. Meeting in a bar, giving them a glass of wine at home, she is dismayed at the cost,

£7 a week. 'I think I can just about manage not to give them water if, next year, I buy no clothes at all. Last year I invested £150 in clothes. That's how I look at it now. I had to replace my boots which were six years old. That cost £40 for two pairs, which I bought in a sale. Two pairs of shoes cost another £40. I buy leather because they are going to be repaired for the next six years. An evening dress cost £20, a cotton one £17. The rest went on two sweaters and underwear. I have no dressing gown, no nightgowns. For the next few years I'll wear the *Sunday Times* Special Offers I've been wearing for the last few years. I dare not go near clothes shops. I mind not having nice clothes immensely more than I mind about nice food. I feel shabby, not so much among friends but in work; men are so obviously impressed by well-dressed women. It would improve my status no end if I could walk into a meeting in some stunning outfit. It's hard to do that arriving at work in my cycling gear with a sweater and skirt in a bag. I can't say: 'I may be sweating but by God I'm fit.'

The bike replaced the car last year. In spite of the careful budgeting, excess of spending over getting was £300. Lecturing and market research in her holiday time made up for some; her father gave her £100. But the car had cost her £200 in eight months and had to go – for £40. The bike cost £90 and the wheels go round 20 miles a day – ten miles there and back to her work in South London. On wet days she pays £1 on the bus, with three changes.

Few people could stand the solitude of a single home life: going out is important. Jane doesn't do too badly; many married people would envy such gadding about. Last year she went to the theatre or cinema roughly once a month and ate out once a fortnight. Nothing very grand: most meals came to less than £5 a head (in Greek restaurants). A man picked up the bill for one in three but sexist exploitation is not what it was. They get supper in return on other evenings. The spinster has only a marginal edge on the bachelor.

The sort of frittering that empties the purse does not happen. She buys no bin-liners (what would she put in them apart from the vegetable parings), no lotions, none of the rubbish so hard to resist. Her bathroom is monastic, except for a wicked tablet of soap – Crabtree and Evelyn (£7.50 a year). She has given up daily newspapers. Twice a week she buys *The Times* and reads every line. Once a month she buys a magazine, this month *Vogue*, next month the NEW STATESMAN or *New Society*. These and television news keep her informed though she glides now over reviews of plays and films which might tempt. 'It is easier to keep myself not too aware of what's going on.' Her great passion for opera is doomed to eternal frustration and she cannot afford a gramophone.

The future, the endless scraping to make her own way, 'It is a ghastly thought. Sometimes I think how marvellous to be married, to have a meal ticket, to have a car, to have a holiday abroad, more than anything to do the work I would really like'. There will be no legacy. Her father, the stockbroker never bought a house at all. Heigh-ho the days of spending for pleasure.

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London Diary

☐ Political marches have a long, often an honourable, history. The Bristol riots helped to carry the first Reform Act. The crowds who by sheer weight pushed over the railings of Hyde Park when not allowed to hold a meeting within it helped to carry the second. But I doubt whether they have any justification or even much effect in a democratic society. There is certainly no indefensible right to hold marches which expose peaceful citizens to violence. Marches give an illusory sense of strength to those who take part in them. When we marched from Aldermaston to London we really felt we were bringing the good news from Aix to Ghent. No one else did. Violence often rebounds on the heads of those who cause it. The rioters who wrecked Lloyd George's meeting at Birmingham Town Hall in 1900 made him a national figure. Would he have risen to the heights otherwise? For my own part I have always believed that the right answer to provocative demonstrations is to ignore them. When the demonstrators march through deserted streets they achieve nothing. If indeed we were faced by a movement that aimed to destroy our democratic system and the multi-racial society to which all democratic politicians are committed – some of them, it seems, reluctantly – then the full resources of the law should be used against it. But it is foolish to use a sledgehammer to crack a few nuts. Argument is the best weapon against violence and unreason and I have no doubt that it will continue to be so.

☐ When Edward VII was Prince of Wales he must have collected the Freedom of more cities than he had mistresses. He can hardly be described as a deserving character. Times have changed. Now Edinburgh City Council can pride itself on refusing to make Prince Charles a Freeman. What has he done to deserve it, asked the gallant councillor? There is a simple answer in a constitutional monarchy: Prince Charles took the trouble of being born as the Queen's eldest son. In addition he is a most deserving and worthy young man who has worked hard at his ceremonial duties. One function of royal personages is to receive honours that would not be accorded to others, and this helps to keep the honours system spinning. The councillors of Edinburgh should take care. They, too, are part of the glittering show. The Lord Provost, I am sure, has appropriate robes for great occasions. And who could be more gorgeously arrayed than the Princes of the Church? Most of those in public life enjoy dressing up and performing antique ceremonies including the bestowal and acceptance of the Freedom of Cities. No one supposes that the Freeman really pastures his cattle on the City meadow. Those who do not care for such things can keep clear of them. But as long as we have a constitutional monarchy we should accept the conventions that go with it. Independent Scotland, if so disposed, can get rid of the monarchy despite its somewhat remote Stuart connections. Until then the Prince of Wales should be treated with more courtesy and respect than Edinburgh has shown.

☐ Yesterday's wisdom is today's folly. There was a time not long ago when pundits rejoiced that railway lines were being torn up and coal mines closed. Country buses and private cars would provide easy transport for all. Natural gas and oil would provide unlimited power. Now these cheerful expectations have been belied. We are in full flight to the glories of the 19th century when Coal was King. The real prospect is starker. For the past hundred years we have been living on the capital accumulated over thousands or even millions of years. This capital is approaching exhaustion as the Dutch have discovered with natural gas. Soon there will be no way out by escaping from one form of energy to another. The energy will not be there. Unimaginable hardships lie ahead. According to Adam Smith it takes a great deal to ruin a nation. Ruin happens sometimes all the same. What worries me is how I am going to write when there is no electricity for my electric typewriter. I can manage without a television set or a refrigerator. Without my typewriter I shall be lost. I must resurrect my fountain pen if I can find any ink.

☐ I am sure it is an admirable thing that school children working for their 'O' levels should be assigned 'projects'. They are set to find out about the General Strike or the Renaissance, much as university students are set to write essays. Their teachers however do not appear to add the further instruction that they should find the answers by reading books. The pursuers of 'projects' do not read books. They write to me. Hardly a day passes without a letter courteously informing me that I have a great reputation as an historian. Will I therefore provide information on the project? One day it is the fall of the Roman empire, the next the assassination of President Kennedy. At first I was a little flattered and replied to the inquiries at length. Now my answers are becoming a full-time occupation, particularly as I often have to look up the answers in some book. What am I to do? Each inquirer is an individual human being whom I do not want to offend or neglect. But I cannot devote my entire life to these answers. Perhaps I should embark on a 'project' to find out how inquirers should be treated.

☐ Schubert has been kind to me. Fifty years ago in Vienna I got his 100th anniversary which really started my musical education. Now I am getting his 150th anniversary in London. This has been very rewarding, so much so that I wish Schubert could have an anniversary of some sort every year. I have heard Brendel playing Schubert sonatas and the Amadeus playing Schubert quartets. No doubt there are more rich experiences to come. All these concerts have been sold out. The musical public of London has been less devoted elsewhere. At the same time as the many Schubert concerts there have also been, or are to be, four recitals of the second Viennese school played by the LaSalle Quartet. This is one of the greatest American quartets, indeed among the finest I have ever heard. Berg, Webern and Schönberg are no doubt very different from Beethoven and Schubert but they are also composers of the first rank who have had an incomparable influence on 20th century music. Their music is played less often which is of course all the more reason to attend concerts when it is. Here I seem to be in a small minority. The concerts by the LaSalle Quartet have been given in a half-empty hall. I suppose the second Viennese school will have to wait for their 100th anniversary before they can fill the concert halls. But if civilisation survives, that time will surely come.

☐ The NEW STATESMAN has found a new editor. As a reader I might have some comment to make when I see how he works out. As a contributor I have none. Throughout my journalistic career which now extends over nearly half-a-century I have stuck firmly to the simple rule that the editor is always right. He is responsible for the paper. He determines its policy. He is far more qualified than I am to judge whether my piece will interest or entertain the readers. I have often disagreed with my editors particularly over dates and points of grammar. But in the last resort I have never disputed an editor's judgment. If a journalist falls out with his editor he must go elsewhere. Of course it is easy for me as only a part-time journalist to preach this doctrine. But then I am only a part-time academic and a part-time television star. There just happen to be three of me. With the NEW STATESMAN I have had my ups and downs during my 30 years' connection with it. Maybe I shall soon be on my travels again. Or maybe not.

A. J. P. Taylor

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ Bath Theatre Royal bar manager Mr Peter Coe is being treated for back injuries after being attacked by two Brownies. The girls, aged about nine, lost their tempers because he had run out of ice cream. They kicked and kneed him and he was hurt when he fell over. The attack happened in the gods during the current run of *Dick Whittington* which stars Anita Harris. Other members of Mr Coe's staff refuse to serve refreshments there during the pantomime as it is too rough. – *Bristol Evening Post* (Bill Ashley)

☐ Ex-miner and former Labour MP for Merioneth, Lord Maelor, is angry that the only 'silence' room – the Truro Room in the Lords library – has been allocated to non-smokers. He told peers yesterday. 'I shall continue to smoke in that room. No one will be able to stop me because if anyone speaks, I will say it is a silence room'. – *Financial Times* (A. B. Knight)

☐ A British Rail divisional manager asked commuters yesterday to smile a bit more and stop scaring his staff. He said that porters are going into hiding rather than face a tongue-lashing from angry passengers when trains do not turn up. – *Daily Telegraph* (C. Lifetree)

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University Forum

Eve Conway*

Telling It Like It Isn't

Wouldn't it be ideal if all literature students had a Wordsworth, a Dickens, a Balzac or a Tolstoy to hand when analysing their works? Or would it? It would probably do us a lot of good by stopping us reading too much into writings or following too closely the fad of biographical reductiveness. When you apply commentary and analysis techniques to a living writer, however, that's a different question, because at least the dead can't answer back and tell you you're off-beam. This was my experience when I tried my – I thought infallible – techniques of criticism on Simon Gray, who when he is not writing West End box office hits is otherwise engaged as an English lecturer at Queen Mary College, London University.

On entering his room, I was first confronted with a caricature of a man (with a cigarette hanging from his lips) which looked remarkably like Simon Gray, on the small blackboard to my right. 'Is that you?' I asked. 'Yes, I suppose so,' he answered, and my mind automatically switched to symbolic associations of self-criticism. I was not so far wrong in this assumption. 'I think some of my plays stink,' he told me, although he wouldn't tell me which ones. 'The trouble with a play is that you don't find out it's bad until rehearsal. There is a difference between plays that read well and those that perform well and frequently plays you think are okay turn out not to be in rehearsal. I feel a playwright has an absolute obligation to do his best for the public. So it is very mortifying, more mortifying than bad reviews – one takes those as being the way of the world – to have a restless, irritable, bored audience and feel they're right. I suppose if I have an overriding purpose in my plays, it is to keep an audience in its seat for two hours.'

A play that has kept audience after audience in its seat is *Otherwise Engaged*, now showing at the Comedy Theatre and on Broadway. Winner of all British Play of the Year awards of 1975 and of major American awards last year, Simon Gray has met his own challenge. *Otherwise Engaged* has been followed up by another play, *The Rear Column*, about five men stuck in the Congo in 1887, which is reviewed on page 297. This follows the roughly two-year cycle of Simon Gray's plays: 'I write all the time, and throw away all the time, and about once every two years a play emerges that I don't throw away.'

One such play to escape the wastepaper bin was *Butley*, Simon Gray's first box-office success. As *Butley* was dedicated to the staff and students, past, present and future of the English Department at Queen Mary College and set in a college of the University of London, I thought it must certainly be an autobiographical work. Convinced then that Butley, the English lecturer (and, like Simon Gray, ex-Cambridge supervisor) who takes the lead, must be a self-portrait, I was disappointed that he didn't pick up the phone and say, 'Woolly Bear, English'; and, unlike Butley, he doesn't cancel tutorials because they require too much administration. Simon Gray put me straight: 'I don't think *Butley* is about QMC. The only identifiable thing in the play was my office: the set was, in fact, a replica of it. Obviously, it is bound to be misleading that Butley is a university lecturer and so am I. I don't think any of my plays are autobiographical. It was easy to set *Butley* in a university office because I knew the details so well.'

Butley calls students 'bastards, which is my term of endearment for bores', and then in *Otherwise Engaged* there is the press-stereotype of a student layabout. Again Simon Gray clarified. 'It seems to me that when a character speaks, a character speaks. It would be ridiculous for Butley to reel off praise about students, because it's not in his nature. I don't feel all students are bastards although it's partly a term of endearment. I feel about students as I feel about everyone. There is a world full of people, some I like, some I don't. Students like Dave in *Otherwise Engaged* are there for a comic function, in *Butley* they are there for the purpose of the play and situation. They are background characters and we find out more about the main characters through them. You don't find universities swarming with Butleys or Daves. The characters are, if you like, fictional characters in an authentic setting.'

Simon Gray insists that the fictional world of his plays and his authentic world as university lecturer are separate entities. 'I like to feel I'm here at QMC as myself,' he says. But the two centres have to a certain extent merged in *Butley*. For example, Butley ridicules one of his tutorial students' essays and at one point, directing a table lamp at her essay without switching it on, asks her if she can see. The remark is underlined when Butley disclaims any intended irony. Simon Gray explains: 'Butley is having fun at the expense of an inert essay that has so clearly been taken from so many other sources that it is not truly herself and therefore not truly worth writing.' Butley's attitude to teaching English also reflects Simon Gray's dislike of exams, which he tends to feel 'are an anomaly in English, a subject that ought to be about anything but exams'. As Simon Gray says, 'Butley is a special case. I mean I'm not Butley. But one of the things he is getting at and obviously feels about the teaching of English is that it has become simply a matter of a career qualification and this ought to be positively opposed to the spirit of English studies'. Then Butley also makes fun of a fellow lecturer's briefcase bulging with notes for a lecture on Blake. 'My own experience of lecturing is that when I've prepared lectures, I induce intense boredom into everyone including myself,' says Simon Gray, 'The best lectures, I suppose, should give an innate sense of the theatre and people should use a lecture in order to express themselves theatrically and thus sort of seduce the audience into self-interest.'

My own experience of Simon Gray's lectures is that they are spontaneous and most like commentary and analysis classes, asking for a response from the student audience. He does, though, dislike lectures intensely. 'What I find horrendous about them is that they're a monologue leaving no room for doubts or questions.' The function of lectures, he feels, should be more subjective. 'My own view is that they should only take place when somebody feels that she or he has something important to say and therefore should be special occasions rather like publishing and, of course, one of the valuable things about lecturing is that it is a kind of publishing, it is making something very public. Perhaps every so often students as well as teachers should say I've come to various conclusions about this or that book or this or that writer, and I would very much like to make it public and invite people to hear it. I think the idea of weekly lectures on poets and novelists is not really conducive to the spirit of equal inquiry that a university ought to have.'

Equal inquiry, dialogue and clarification seem to me to tie up with Simon Gray's attitude to his plays. 'My plays are really about language, the way people speak to each other or fail to speak to each other.' He finds sloppy language irritating although he admits he is guilty of it himself. 'In speech we're all sloppy,' he says. And I think anyone talking to Simon Gray would be conscious that he feels this way. He will answer your question with a question to make you clarify and be precise about what you are saying.

But above all, and I'm sure Simon Gray would totally disagree with my emphasis on this, he has an artistic response to literature (he would say, I'm sure, most lecturers had). His emphasis is on a subjective and imaginative response to his plays and the teaching of English. He insists the only advantage of being a lecturer and playwright is that 'it gives you a better sense of how bloody difficult it is to write anything'. He remains a lecturer because, as he says, 'I happen to like doing it very much. Otherwise I would have stopped a long time ago.'

* *Eve Conway studies English at Queen Mary College, London.*

SEX PROBLEMS?

Sex and relationship counselling can help people who have sexual difficulties or suffer from sexual problems. Professional psychosexual therapy can help many woman who suffer from an inability to achieve orgasm and men who suffer from premature ejaculation. The Marie Stopes has regular clinics for individuals and couples seeking help, so if you feel you need professional advice ring 01-388 0662 for an appointment

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First Person

Arthur Marshall

Cold Comfort Cottage

Our pleasing Devon village of Appleton has one priceless advantage. It is off the beaten track and on the way to nowhere. Not that the Teign Valley road, off which a narrower and less frequented way leads to us, exactly ranks as a beaten track, but it seems by comparison something of a smart highway, conducting southwards and westwards, as it does, eager motorists intent on shopping in Chudleigh (A.1. for veg.) or keen to press on to Newton Abbot and snap up a set of matching kebab skewers in its more sophisticated trading centre. Visitors come to Appleton neither for veg nor skewers. They come, if they come at all, to see friends. Any strange arrivals here arrive by mistake and have to be politely directed back whence they came. They go quietly and we return once more to rural peace.

We are situated in the Dartmoor National Park and will go to any lengths to preserve its charm and to prevent any vulgarisation or diminution of its beauties. Some years ago, a new and rather flashy inhabitant approached me and asked whether I would allow him to erect at the edge of my orchard a fish-and-chip boutique. The request was accompanied by knowing winks and nudges and hints that there would be 'something in it for you' (5 per cent of the profits was the extremely generous offer, and the run of my teeth on Mondays, vinegar ad lib). He has long since, a fish out of water, left the district. Appleton was plainly not for his kind. Smart alecks frying and selling fish and chipped potatoes are not at all in the spirit of the place.

The name Dartmoor means different things to different people. I have mentioned before our late village *blanchisseuse*, Mrs Hooper, who had never heard of George VI and whom, as I weekly deposited and collected my wash, I came to know quite well. To her, Dartmoor, on the picturesque fringes of which she had spent her life, meant solely the prison. It loomed large in her thinking and had become an obsession. Informed by gossipy neighbours that a prisoner had escaped and was on the run, she was invariably convinced that his plan was to make a bee-line for her, spread-eagle her on the bed and chop her head off. Dartmoor prison was a good 30 miles away but that distance would be a mere nothing to somebody with but one thought on his mind: 'Get Mrs Hooper!' To avert this little inconvenience, she used to leave her front door open for a night or two and put out a tasteful snack: beef sandwiches, jam tarts, a pick of cheese, light ale. The idea was to placate him and stop him mounting the stairs to do her in, and when I pointed out that such a substantial intake of vitamins, almost certainly on an empty stomach, would immediately supply the vigour so necessary for a really effective head-chopping, she was much flustered. Mrs Hooper lived on, every part of her intact, to the age of 86 and we miss her greatly.

Not every aspect of our life here below is, as we know, roses all the way and even Devon has two disadvantages. One of these occurs, alas, around 9 p.m. It is at about this hour, with dinner gently digesting within and the telly news just coming up, that we in the South West are treated to our daily sonic boom. Does it come from a French or British Concorde? How high is it flying? Is it coming or going? It matters little. It is a sound like no other – unnerving, unearthly and wholly detestable. It rattles roofs and shakes windows. Public opinion has clearly forced the authorities to reduce the aircraft's appalling din at take-off and landing, but there is nothing at all to be done about reducing a boom. It is a natural phenomenon invented by God, like earthquakes and tidal waves and other nastinesses, and it can't be tampered with. A boom is a boom, and poor old Devon and Cornwall, relatively sparsely populated areas and not greatly given to complaining, are evidently considered aurally expendable.

The other disadvantage is that we sometimes get weather that is obviously intended for others. Snow blizzards, with 'Scotland' written all over them, decide to drop in on us instead and take us all by surprise. I write in February and at a time when Appleton is cut off from the outside world and every single road in the county is closed. The sight of so much snow, deep and crisp and even, sends one's thoughts flying to Good King Wenceslas. I have often wondered whether the press of the day was friendly or hostile about that famous episode on the Feast of Stephen. Though outwardly a generous enough gesture, there was serious risk of hypothermia to the page, forced by the monarch to accompany him across the icy fields. There was another consideration, which the *Morning Post* of the day doubtless pointed out:

> That the King's action during the recent cold snap was kindly meant, there can be no doubt. We merely question the wisdom of singling out one person alone for this sort of royal patronage. It smacks of favouritism and can only bring with it envy and bitterness.
>
> The peasant honoured by the King, a Mr L. Goodchild, interviewed later in his cottage residence conveniently situated for supplies of both water and kindling wood, said 'You could have knocked us down with a feather, the old girl and me, when His Majesty waltzed in. Talk about surprise! We weren't half chuffed with the grub, and the wine went down a treat. At that moment, all we had in the house was a few rusks and a small tin of Slumberola (you just add milk).' Asked if he would again like to accept regal gifts of this nature, Mr Goodchild answered with a twinkle 'Too bloody true I would.'
>
> It is understood that the royal park is now daily filled with peasants feverishly gathering winter fuel well within sight of the Palace windows.

Well, it has been Wenceslas Week here. At one point during the worst of the weather, our electricity failed and disappeared for 17 hours. In our remoteness, there is of course no gas supply and we are warmed and lit and cooked for electrically. Not all of Appleton was thus deprived, I am glad to say, but just a small section in the centre of the village and consisting of the butcher-cum-grocer (anxious about his deep freeze), the village pub (prettily ablaze with candle-light and fully frequented), the sub-post-office-cum-stationer's (run by a truly saintly pair) and a small quantity of houses, dotted here and there and among them, you will be horrified to hear, 'Myrtlebank' itself. Why the South Western Electricity Board should single me out for this snub, I cannot imagine (bills paid on the dot, and the meter-reader refreshed with coffee if he calls during inclement weather. There's gratitude for you).

When, in the wintry gloom, it became clear which houses had power and which had not, little parties set out from the lighted houses and made their way through the snow to the houses in darkness, bringing with them comforts of every sort. At 'Myrtlebank' I welcomed, at intervals, a thermos of tea (Miss Entwhistle), a piping hot stew (Cousin Madge), mince pies (Mr and Mrs Harcourt) and a huge canister of soup, together with a slightly rickety camping stove on which to warm it (Canon Mountjoy). One was warmed by more than the soup. The human kindness available in our village is really very remarkable. But what, you ask, from the Bultitudes? Wings of chicken and all the etceteras? Silver buckets of caviare delivered by the chauffeur? Half a Stilton? Cobwebby bottles of port? The Bultitudes, first in line when it comes to generosity if irritating in almost every other way, are, need I say, abroad. At any moment, a shower of patronising and highly coloured post-cards of exotic foreign parts will descend on us ('Don't you *adore* Tangier?'). Had they been here, however, I can hardly think that the Electricity Board would have dared to insult *them*.

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Letters to the Editor

Multinational Power

Sir, Mr Stuart Holland cannot, in his comments (Letters 17 February) on Mr Galbraith's article, have it both ways. Among the evils that (in *The Socialist Challenge*) he asserts the multinational corporations have inflicted on the under-developed countries – e.g., undermining national economic sovereignty, exploiting profits through artificial transfer pricing, increasing the urban-rural imbalance, etc, – is the charge (on p.371) that in developed country markets they 'impose entry barriers against indigenous less developed country exports in manufactures'. But now, he accuses the multinationals of having fostered a new and more intense competition in these same markets by employing '. . . the most efficient technology, management, marketing and other skills . . .' in countries having low labour costs. Quite rightly, he concludes that this has meant that '. . . no developed country can compete with the resultant unit cost'.

But Mr Holland has also told us that a cardinal principle of future socialist overseas development policy is that the British government should '. . . open access to its domestic markets for imports of both manufactures and non-manufactures from less developed countries'. (SC, p.379). What are we to make of this? He apparently perceives that the multinationals have, at one and the same time, blocked non-competitive 'indigenous' exports to developed countries and stimulated imports rendered competitive by technology, management skills, etc. But would not any future socialist government that aims to provide 'access' to all imports continue to provide, or at least encourage the building of, the economic underpinnings that make the products of the developing countries competitive in the markets of the world? If so, Mr Holland can scarcely object to the multinationals having successfully done precisely this – unless, that is, he is merely fiddling with words (i.e., 'socialist' technology and management skills are good but 'capitalist' technology and management skills are bad).

A more plausible explanation is that Mr Holland, a well-known advocate of limiting imports when they begin to hurt, would in fact seek in the future to allow such 'access' by the developing countries only to products of 'viable indigenous enterprises' (SC, p.370) and means, by this term, enterprises that lack sufficient capital and technology to be truly competitive. Put simply, this means cottage industries. It should escape no one that, notwithstanding its socialist perspective, this is a form of neo-colonialism that, both by the testimony of Mr Galbraith and by Mr Holland's own admission, the multinationals have made significant contributions to ending in many parts of the world.

REUBEN CLARK

5 Cheapside
London EC2

Sir, Mr Galbraith wrote an interesting and stimulating article (NS 10 February) on multinationals; his feature, packed with facts from real business-life, must be read with respect. Mr Holland attacks Mr Galbraith with theological zeal (NS 17 February) but fails to refute his arguments. Mr Holland has persuaded himself with commendable force that multinationals pursue undesirable policies and as Mr Galbraith sees much good in their activities he is unfaithful to the orthodox proposition that all multinationals are 'baddies'. Mr Holland seems to detest people not toeing the 'trad' line on multinationals but has he actually contemplated the possibility of Mr Galbraith (or anyone else for that reason) shifting (if he has) his position in the light of acquiring more knowledge about their operations? It is possible to learn – even for Mr Galbraith!

Mr Holland condemns multinationals, almost hysterically, without actually citing a single fact as to why he takes such a rabid view of their activities. His views of them would be more convincing if they weren't second-hand, or were based on factual experience. Or does he like to believe that some companies – like some people he dislikes – can never achieve a state of grace?

Much rubbish is being talked about industry by those who have neither knowledge nor experience of its operations at any level of sophistication. This ignorance often results in becoming ridiculous in the defence of sacred cows – especially when these are being assailed by reputable and honest thinkers, in this case by Mr Galbraith on multinationals. I would suggest that we follow the American example and establish a group or an institute for the study of multinationals; systematic study and careful research is preferable to uninformed verbal pyrotechnics in the formulation of policy and action. On many matters of public policy, Britain is short on facts based on research and long on idealistic clap-trap based on outdated prejudice.

NICHOLAS A. H. STACEY

Reform Club
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London SW1

A Case for Import Controls

Sir, Your editorial (NS 17 February) 'The Case Against Import Controls' hardly matched up to the serious and deteriorating position of British manufacturing industry. What happened to the motor cycle industry is now history but surely before our very eyes the same sort of development is taking place in other vital sectors of the economy, including motor cars, machine tools and steel. Where is it all to end? Certainly if the present degeneration continues there is no hope of mopping up 1¼ million unemployed besides many thousands more who are merely kept out of the dole queue through government subsidies of one kind or another.

It is so easy to speak of the production of 'inferior cars at inflated prices' and 'subsidised syndicalism at Longbridge' but it does make one wonder how well the writer knows the motor industry and the people who work in it. Surely it does not take much imagination to appreciate that morale in the industry at the present time must be at a very low ebb indeed. One does not need to be an industrial psychologist to understand that in times like these people tend to turn to extreme leadership. The media by its constant harping on the alleged faults and inadequacies of British cars have played more than a small part in bringing about the present situation with such a high level of import penetration. It has become trendy to buy a foreign car but the people who do so rarely consider that they are helping to put themselves out of a job.

What the motor industry needs at the present time and other industries too is the stimulus of a large home market. We cannot afford to suck in ever rising quantities of manufactured goods because this is what is creating our balance of payments problems, driving us into

About Oxford books

An exile's story

No, neither beneath an alien sky
Nor sheltering under alien wings
At that time I was with my people
Where my unhappy people lived

With these powerful lines by Anna Akhmatova, Efim Etkind begins his *Notes of a Non-Conspirator.* Born in 1918, Etkind was for more than twenty years a professor at the Herzen Pedagogical Institute in Leningrad and a leading member of the Leningrad Writers' Union. His book tells how he lost both these positions in 1974 ('In an interval between lectures a laboratory assistant came looking for me to tell me to telephone the Rector's office. . . . "Could you please come and see me. Yes, immediately." '), and was compelled to leave the Soviet Union and continue his work in France, where he is now Professor of Russian Literature at the University of Paris at Nanterre. The book is not a political diatribe but an exploration, moving and sometimes grimly comic, of some of the realities of Soviet intellectual life. The spotlight is directed primarily on the events of the single day when the author's fate was decided, but it sometimes moves backwards in time to illuminate aspects of Soviet justice, the often scandalous behaviour of academics, the power of the Party, the pressure of the KGB. Discussing the book in the *New Statesman,* John Bayley wrote: 'Etkind's account of the proceedings that resulted in his expulsion from his job and from the Writers' Union, and his subsequent exile, is particularly interesting because of the publicity that such things can now receive. . . . His manner is febrile, naturally, but never obsessed. The way he darts about, sowing his narrative in the manner of Swift or Nabokov with digressions on poetry, linguistics, and literary gossip, is a constant delight. One must admit the cast of his mind to be far more congenial than that of Solzhenitsyn whom he admires but does not, we may suspect, feel close to. His students, past and present, are fortunate in him.' *Notes of a Non-Conspirator,* translated by Peter France, was published last month at £5.25.

Society changing

Change in British Society, the 1978 Reith Lectures delivered by A. H. Halsey, Professor of Social and Administrative Studies at Oxford, will be published by OUP next Autumn. NS readers who followed them in their recent BBC broadcasts may like to know that Professor Halsey is co-editor, with Jerome Karabel, of the recently published *Power and Ideology in Education,* £6.95, a collection of readings on educational institutions in modern society. The articles are by sociologists, economists, historians, and anthropologists, and they display the variety of theoretical perspectives now competing for attention in educational research. They deal not only with the United States and Great Britain, but also with China, Cuba, France, Ghana, Peru, Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union.

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the arms of the IMF and keeping our people unemployed. A policy of import controls must be introduced, the sooner the better, and these should be universally applied, though exceptions could be made in respect of the underdeveloped countries. Alongside this, massive investment from oil revenues should take place in our manufacturing industry as a means of regaining a competitive position in world markets, for the alternative is to fritter away these valuable resources and to live in a fool's paradise for another decade or so. Action though is urgent and if this is what Mr Benn stands for one can only say 'more strength to his arm'.

ROY HUGHES

House of Commons

Sir, Murray Sayle (NS 17 February) has changed his mind somewhat since last he wrote. Then he attacked Japanese import restrictions. Now he finds tariff and non-tariff barriers are no longer the problem. Instead, he feels that there is not much that Europe and the United States can profitably sell to Japan. Nobody ever pretended exporting to Japan was easy but your reporter would suggest the task is well-nigh impossible.

His conclusion is equally bleak: 'We are not likely to get much out of them [the Japanese] this year, or next, except more polite promises.' Yet Japan's economic performance last year and aims for 1978 deserve something more than blanket dismissal. True, there was an enormous trade surplus in 1977 and expansion did not reach its target figure but a 5 per cent growth rate might be worth a round of applause. Statistics released this week show Britain had insignificant growth in 1977. Were Britain consistently to approach Japan's growth rate then less might be heard about its, allegedly, unfair business practices. Too many lame excuses are being dreamt up for Britain's own economic weaknesses. Japan has higher *per capita* income, higher personal savings levels, lower inflation and lower taxation rates because of superior economic management. Admittedly industrial investment has a high priority through smaller defence and welfare budgets, but the British public's demand for Japanese cars indicates that it is the quality of the product that empties the showrooms.

The only way that the trade balance between Britain and Japan should be corrected is through the efforts of British exporters. If they take their chances the protectionist pressure, which you rightly reject, might recede.

ROGER BUCKLEY

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London W11

Beating a Ban

Sir, Contrary to the impression given by Ian Black's article 'Village of the Damned' (NS February 24), the film *Khirbet Khiza* was not successfully banned by the Israeli Government. It was in fact transmitted in full on Israeli television before Black's article appeared.

The attempts to get *Khirbet Khiza* banned were not the sole prerogative of 'an intolerant, condescending, oppressive right-wing regime'. Others (including a former television critic of the *Jerusalem Post*) argued that it misrepresented the general conduct of Israeli soldiers in the War of Independence. Liberals with whom I discussed the matter were angered by the fact that so much public money had been expended on a single production which, despite its high technical quality, was inappropriate for transmission in the 30th anniversary year of the state's existence. Had the film been one episode in a balanced series, rather than a one-off venture, probably everyone would have been happy. These arguments have more or less weight depending on your point of view. In essence, however, they are about the role of a monopoly state broadcasting system rather than the Jewish claim to Palestine. And this is an issue of particular significance in a country currently debating whether or not to embrace commercial television.

The fact that in this case government attempts to prevent the showing of an embarrassing piece of journalism were in fact frustrated is surely a matter for some celebration, and not the carping criticism to which Ian Black submits it.

JOHN SHIRLEY

54 Trinity Gardens
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Temperate Youth

Sir, A. J. P. Taylor (NS 17 February) is too specific in disparaging what he sees as students' lack of eagerness for a better world. Our co-residence committee really wrote that 'women would rather walk across the quad to wash in a stone basin than have to live in a separate part of college'. This shows no lack of spirit; merely acceptance that we cannot magic the resources for new plumbing of questionable value. We can, and do, influence university policy where it can be changed. We would rather change the attitudes of those with power than beat our heads against their empty bank balances.

It has taken many people much time to realise that the consistent proposal of reasonable views wields much more power than any Damoclean threat of coercion by sit-in. Few authorities are really bloody-minded enough to refuse harmonious relations at the cost of anything sane they can afford. Oxford University is as full of archaisms as its age would suggest. Open-mindedness by all involved is the best solution. And instead of hours spent sat in, we may even have time to work as well.

EDWARD HOLDEN

University College
Oxford

Democracy in Rhodesia

Sir, In your editorial on Rhodesia (NS 24 February) you urge the continuation of economic sanctions and guerrilla warfare until it can be seen that Mr Ian Smith does not renege on the Salisbury settlement, and their subsequent termination in order to make of Rhodesia 'a model African multi-racial democracy'. Very fine sentiments, but it is not necessarily the purpose of economic sanctions or guerrilla warfare to bring about universal suffrage which, it is assumed, would confer power upon Bishop Muzorewa, the Reverend Sithole and Chief Chirau, with or without Mr Smith lurking in the wings. The Patriotic Front's purpose is to remove the present Rhodesian Government from office and to instal the leaders of the Patriotic Front instead. Whether they achieve this end democratically or militarily is of no consequence to them or to their Soviet patrons nor, I would suggest, to the British and US governments, the 'front line' presidents, the Organisation of African Unity or the United Nations who are the authors of the economic sanctions. Indeed, the only people to whom it does matter are the inhabitants of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. If elections are held and have the predicted outcome, the Patriotic Front will continue to fight, and will be encouraged to do so by at least some of the external forces listed above The only difference will be that they will then be fighting against the newly-elected Zimbabwean government.

If the Patriotic Front disrupts these elections or prevents them from happening, this will not cause too much external heart-searching either for what is required is not a democratically elected government in Salisbury but one composed of Africans rather than of Europeans. None of the much-praised 'front line' presidents acquired power by any means approximating to democracy but this does not unduly trouble the rest of the world. The purpose of the external supporters of the Patriotic Front are, variously, to remove Mr Smith, to further Soviet ambitions in Africa, 'to recoup the prestige of the democratic West in Africa' (as you say), and to assuage both African nationalist fervour and Western liberal consciences. It has, regrettably but emphatically, never had anything to do with conferring universal suffrage upon the beleagured inhabitants of Rhodesia.

D. WOTHERSPOON

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Persian Propaganda

Sir, The Press Counsellor of the Shah of Iran in London has ignored or entirely missed the points (Letters 20 January) raised in the masterly concise and cogent reportage published in your issue of 6 January 1978, under the heading of 'Stirrings in a Persian Garden'. He has, parrot-like, repeated the propaganda stuff fed to the public in Iran, morning, noon and night, by the government mass media. This propaganda is belied by the foreign press all over the world and the 'samizdat' literature published here and distributed among the literate segment of the society. Furthermore, the never ending eulogies of the Government are becoming counter-productive, inasmuch as people believe less and less in what is said by officials.

Would the Counsellor deny, without prevarication, the accusation levelled at the Government that it is not complying with our constitutional laws bearing upon free parliamentary election, free press and expression of opinion, independent judiciary and the accountability of the Government before the Parliament? Would he also confirm that nobody is being beaten up, tortured or imprisoned for exposing government oppression, vast corruption among officials, their ineptitude and utter disregard for people's well-being?

What we Iranians aspire to is compliance with our fundamental constitutional laws and an honest government which will bring to account and punish corrupt and incompetent officials who are wasting our exhaustible oil money by dishonest methods, or sheer ineptitude, and obstructing the way to real progress and prosperity. It is not good enough to cover up government misdeeds by hiring thugs and beating up people or breaking shop windows. Neither can the intelligent and patriotic element of the society be gagged any more by calling them reds, blacks, or the 'lackeys of colonialists'.

HAMID REFAHI

Shiraz
Iran

Brotherly Love

Sir, Hugh Jenkins is his usual ungenerous self in his letter in the NS of 17 February. He claims credit for the demise of the ludicrous museum charges, whereas he was the lucky beneficiary, as Minister for the Arts at that particular time, of the arduous work others had done over years to oppose and defeat the charges – Denis Mahon, Hugh Leggatt, numberless museum directors, and myself in the parliamentary arena.

One hopes this is not a measure of the egotistical imbalance of his threatened autobiography.

ANDREW FAULDS

House of Commons

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

William Shawcross

The Flying Doctor

Uncertain Greatness by ROGER MORRIS *Quartet* £5.95
The Cloud of Danger by GEORGE F. KENNAN *Hutchinson* £5.95

Henry Kissinger has institutionalised himself as no former Secretary of State and indeed no former President has ever done. When Hubert Humphrey died the top group of mourners, photographed together, consisted of Carter, Ford, Nixon and Kissinger. His office a few blocks from the White House is a place of pilgrimage for almost all foreign leaders visiting Washington. He is like the man with a million-pound note – he has to pay for hardly anything himself; others fall over themselves for the privilege of associating with him. He received over $2m. advance for his memoirs and gets about $1m. for a part-time consultancy with NBC TV. His Washington offices are paid for by Georgetown University, from which he also receives $35,000 a year for nominal services. In New York he has other offices and a research staff courtesy of Robert S. Anderson, Chairman of Atlantic Richfield. (It was a source of great sorrow to Anderson and the *Observer* that the *Sunday Times* obtained the British serial rights of the book, but the researchers remain and thus the *Observer* is indirectly subsidising a Thomson project.) He demands, and receives, $10,000 a lecture to private groups of businessmen; Chase Manhattan pays a lot for his name on the masthead, as does the investment banking firm of Goldman Sachs. He is, as ever, intimately bound to the Rockefellers; he is a director of the Council on Foreign Relations (which is now run by one of his most loyal aides) and of the Foreign Policy Association; he is chairman of the international committee of the Hubert Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs, and much much more besides.

He still travels surrounded by a squad of security men, and local police-chiefs stop the traffic and provide sirened escorts to speed him to his Rockefeller jet taxi. As always his most attentive courtiers are in the press, and he breakfasts almost daily – off the record, of course – with the select, discreet, smiling and admiring band of Washington columnists who know how best to express their gratitude. (Critical journalists – 'soreheads', he calls them – cannot get near him). In all parts of the Western world, powerful editors scurry when he calls and actually beg for the privilege of paying his bills and providing him with cars when he is down their way. His consultancy with NBC allows him to make personal political promotions across the USA and the world without any questioning; when he makes a 'special', as recently on Eurocommunism, he is editor, anchorman, consultant, star and owner of the foreign rights. The BBC evidently paid $75,000 for that misleading package.

His friends in the press are already predicting that he will soon be asked back into formal office, perhaps as a special envoy to the Middle East. That prospect, as Roger Morris's book shows in part, is frightening indeed. Morris is one of the 'soreheads'; he resigned from Kissinger's staff over the invasion of Cambodia. Since then he has become an articulate and iconoclastic critic of Washington's entire foreign policy establishment and consensus. His book is a serious critique of several aspects of Kissinger's first reign. He describes well the awful paranoia of the Nixon White House basement, and his account of how Kissinger gathered control of the entire process, isolating the wretched William Rogers, is thoroughly detailed.

The book is patchy: Morris deals most fully with those areas with which he was best acquainted – Indochina and Africa. His analysis of the American failure to act helpfully over Biafra is a nasty tale of bureaucratic incompetence and presidential neglect. 'They're going to let them starve, aren't they, Henry?' asked Nixon of the anti-Ibo State Department. 'Yes,' replied Kissinger simply. A pall of racism hung over the NSC basement. Alexander Haig ('Stalin to Henry's Lenin') would pretend to beat drums on the table when African affairs were discussed and Kissinger seemed shaken when Morris told him that the tribes of northern Nigeria had a Semitic appearance while the Ibos were more negroid. 'But you have always told me that the Ibos were more gifted and accomplished than the others. What do you mean, "more negroid"?' Kissinger asked. 'Is there something in it for the jigs?' Nixon inquired of one presidential address on foreign policy. 'Yes,' replied Kissinger.

Morris is excellent on Indochina. As everyone but his unctuous friends in the press acknowledged, Kissinger was really the 'hawk of hawks', far more anxious to use force than either William Rogers or Melvin Laird. It was he, not Laird, who always wanted more and more bombing, whether or not military targets existed. Only in the evening would he don a cape of white feathers and coo at the tables of Georgetown journalists – some of whom he was covertly wiretapping.

Uncertain Greatness also deals well with that aspect of Kissinger's power which his friends today tend to ignore – his extremely close association with a malign and criminal President. With Nixon, Kissinger would be almost embarrassingly sycophantic: in the privacy of his own office he would be contemptuous of the President's narrow intellect and would complain about his ignorance and his drinking. And yet Kissinger never dissented from the President's more dangerous ventures; in particular he went along with the monstrous and deeply damaging 'madman theory' of war, according to which Nixon decided that he could get his way if the whole world thought he was crazy. Hence the annihilation of Cambodia and the Christmas bombing of Hanoi. Crazy he was, but it made no difference to the outcome of the war. They made their wasteland and still today the credulous call it peace.

Morris's book is the best yet written on the real nature of Henry Kissinger; but it is flawed by bad temper. His contempt for Kissinger is matched by a contempt for almost everyone else involved in foreign policy, especially career diplomats. Kissinger's greatest failure, he suggests, is that he did not clear the dead wood from the State Department. In fact it was the honesty of bureaucratic institutions and procedures that eventually saved the US from Nixon and the world from him and his sub-lieutenant.

In the central part of *The Cloud of Danger*, George Kennan puts the main achievement of the Nixon-Kissinger years – the encouragement of 'détente' with the USSR – into its perspective. For all the histrionics, he writes, 'the change was one of degree, not of substance. And the fields in question remained limited'. Nonetheless, he welcomes it without much reserve. Kennan took time off from study of the Franco-Russian alliance of 1893 to write this brief summary 'of my thinking on different problems of American foreign policy'. This he saw as a 'duty' to be done 'out of justice to my readers'. They had a right to know how all his ideas on different parts of the world fitted together.

Kennan is a sane and rather admirable man, a diplomat-historian with distinguished, now distant service as ambassador in Moscow and Belgrade. Not all of his book lives up to his past work. His principal call is sensible enough: it is for a retrenchment of American intervention and influence. He notes that increased congressional interference in foreign policy-making since Vietnam and Watergate renders the process more cumbersome, more inflexible, less private. The US can therefore do less. 'Whoever insists on playing card games with all his cards face up on the table should avoid the fancier and more expensive game of poker.' This Kissinger never understood.

Like Morris, Kennan has strong dislikes. He abhors the American press and television, citing 'the low educational level of the great majority of reporters and announcers; the persistent tendency to overdramatisation; the fascination with the trivial at the expense of the essential . . .' He is also dismissive of any attitude which he considers stems from Western guilt. Thus he scorns current concerns with the 'Third World' and the North-South dialogue. If his ancestors could build Wisconsin without foreign aid, why could not underdeveloped countries do the same today? Much of the book consists of cursory surveys of different areas of the world. Of Latin America he admits to little knowledge but believes 'Americans are not very popular, by and large, in those parts; and I can

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see no very good reason why they need be'. He suggests that they be left alone; apart from Cuba and Panama the US has no vital interest there. He sees only trouble in high-minded posing on Rhodesia and South Africa; the US should relax its pressure there. The Arab oil producers 'have us by the short hairs . . . No American president should ever approach other rulers from a position as humiliating as this'.

But Kennan's principal concern is for the stability of US-Soviet relations. He blames the way in which Nixon and Kissinger exalted the idea of détente for the current reaction against it. There has been no sell-out to the Russians and the present danger is not great. Far too much reliance is placed in the West on the estimates of the military-industrial complex, always concerned to paint the Soviet bear with fangs and claws. Kennan dismisses as fantasy the idea of Russia marching into Western Europe; imagine, he says, the difficulty it would have maintaining lines of communication across angry Poland and through sullen Prague. He also scoffs at the idea of a monolithic, all-powerful Stalinist leadership; instead he sees it as old and cautious, very wary of calling for unnecessary exertions from its people. He is certain the Kremlin does not want war but warns that Western belief in its inevitability can become self-fulfilling. The West should consider the Soviet problem as political rather than military. As for human rights, too much is made of it; he points out the paradox that there is far more Western concern now than when conditions were really frightful under Stalin. He suggests that policies like Carter's could be counterproductive and that all the US government should do is insist that so long as persecution does continue 'there must always be maintained a certain distance between the two governments – a distance which no summit meetings, no warm toasts, no friendship societies . . . can overcome'. On occasion he seems over-generous to the Russian leaders; thus he says of Angola, 'presumably they sanctioned, or acquiesced in the intervention by the Cubans'.

Kennan and Kissinger are in broad agreement on many aspects of US-Soviet relations. The difference between the two men over the way in which the US should behave towards the rest of the world is, however, almost total. Kennan is prepared to accept the realities of domestic constraint; Kissinger was not. Kennan has enough confidence in the American example not to demand that it be imposed; Kissinger was for imposition. Kennan understands that areas and countries have their own imperatives; Kissinger saw them as important only in his strategic terms. Kennan would stop the US interfering in third world countries; Kissinger deliberately destabilised Chile and produced Pinochet. Kennan had always considered the Vietnam war an awful blunder, and strategically irrelevant to boot; Kissinger considered it so vital that it was continued six more years and Cambodia was liquidated too. Kennan is an honest man; Kissinger is a known liar (look only at his record on the wiretaps). It is not Kennan who is paid millions to misinform us, and whose return to office is currently being touted.

John Bayley

If They Only Knew What?

The Older Hardy by ROBERT GITTINGS *Heinemann* £6.95

Each of us is a special case; and rightly so. The only time in Goncharov's novel when Oblomov, that most accommodatingly passive of heroes, gets really cross is when his valet asks him why he can't behave like *other people*. Good art knows we are not other people, and in various ways tells us so, because it is always itself a special case. Encountering the personality of a really good novelist (and so many depressing novels of today want us and them to be considered as typical cases) offers the rich and rare experience of seeming to assert and confirm our separate individualities.

This is pre-eminently true with Hardy. The personality, the *animula* in his poems and novels, can be all the more intimate with us because it is so reticent: an effect of its peculiar privacy is to make it accessible in an equally peculiar way. If we find it sympathetic it gives a kind of comfort, a mental equivalent of the physical relation of cows in a field or trees in a wood at night. There is virtue in this, imprinting itself involuntarily. Were it proved, by some unlikely but incontrovertible biographical discovery, that Shakespeare was an unremitting snob, drank to excess, beat his wife, exploited his friends and was underhand in his business dealings, it would only make me more convinced than ever that he was a good man, good in his own special way. What matters, as with Hardy, is not how he was present to others, but how his art presents him. It cannot lie, because self-presentation is not the point of the art, any more than it is in a Rembrandt self-portrait.

However sympathetic it may be to the subject – and no one could be more sympathetic than Robert Gittings has been in his two-part study – biography must in its nature and purpose disallow the special case. It has to catch the artist both ways, attaching his art to the living he shared with other people, yet also separating him from his art and portraying him warts and all, in his habit as he lived and not as he created. With some writers – Tennyson, Kipling, James Joyce, even Henry James – this does not matter and may be an actual advantage: in the case of Hardy it is subtly calamitous. In the kindest, nicest, most genial way, Professor Gittings demolishes the spirit of Hardy in his poems and novels, as effectively as do the films, with all their sympathy of treatment, sense of landscape, period care, pretty girls and pretty art direction. All Hardy's work depends on privacy, and his own special kind of withdrawal from it, and biography and television today have no more sense of privacy than a hospital nurse. They cheerfully recognise our personal right to it but have no idea of its function in art: naturally enough perhaps, for the art that needs it as much as Hardy's does is of a comparatively rare sort.

In *The Young Thomas Hardy* this did not so much matter, but in his later volume all the equivocal shadows and inwardness of the second half of Hardy's life, or lives, revealed, imagined, or concealed as they are in hundreds of poems, are brought out into the open, where they suddenly look rather dull. That is unfortunate, because dull is not the word one would use of Hardy as he is manifested in his writings; but that we should receive such an impression is not really Gittings's fault, given the nature of his task and the way he has set about it. He unearths facts – yet Hardy's own peculiar kind of fact is more relevant to the sense of a being we have in his work. Without apparent intention – for no great writer was ever less narcissistic – Hardy nonetheless made himself up in his novels and poems, just as he did with naïve guile and intention in the *Life*, which he pretended had been written by his second wife, Florence Dugdale. The result there is totally compelling, for if 'the truest poetry is the most feigning' so, in Hardy's case, is bogus biography.

One of Cyril Connolly's aphorisms was that when you see a delightful old man, spreading courtesy and benevolence like a tree its shade, you can be sure he is an ogre and that human bones lie around his roots. Of course: the point is too obvious to startle us as it is intended to, and Professor Gittings makes the mistake of trying to surprise us in the same way. He observes for example that Kate Hardy, the younger sister, 'had no illusions' about her famous brother, and on the last page he tells the story of how, the last survivor of the four siblings, she returned from a Hardy occasion in 1939, laughing at the compliments of the speakers, and exclaimed: 'If they only knew!' So far from suggesting dark secrets this is surely the cheerful comment of any member of a close family about the one who has become a 'great man'. It exclaims at mere incongruity – 'Tommy has taken them all in' – in a way that Hardy himself would have appreciated.

For the fact is, as Kate perhaps felt, that Tom's luck in the greatness stakes had been astronomical. When he gave up novels (and Gittings is perceptive and persuasive about the reasons and non-reasons for this) he made an equally spectacular killing, apparently against all the odds, as a poet. In a society prepared to idolise a 'great writer' as they did royalty or riches, and happy to recognise in *The Dynasts* an achievement comparable to that of great financiers and captains of industry, it is no wonder that Hardy's success story made Henry James – as a would-be fellow tycoon – green with envy.

Despite his humane sense and balance, Gittings's instincts as a researcher are challenged and seduced by that 'If they only knew': it insensibly shapes his narrative tone with a compulsive urge to show where Hardy suppresses or distorts the 'truth'. An instance would be Hardy's account of his wife Emma's death, which he alleged had taken him by surprise, having had no idea how ill she was. Gittings proves he must

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have had: Emma was in continual agony with gallstones and renal colitis for months before she died, and two days before the strain and sickness made her heart suddenly give out she dragged herself downstairs to entertain two American ladies, admirers of her husband. Persuaded out to chat with them, he paid no attention to the fact that Emma was weeping with pain, and the night before she died he went out to a rehearsal of *The Trumpet-Major*, which the Hardy players were about to put on in Dorchester. When Emma's small maid rushed into his room in the early morning to say her mistress was very ill, Hardy stared coldly at her and remarked, 'Your collar is crooked', before coming to visit an Emma who barely recognised him and was dead within five minutes.

The most damning evidence is how Hardy later 'had to tailor even a poem to fit the story of the autobiography'.

> And that calm evening when you climbed the stair
> After a languid rising from your chair

became

> And that calm eve when you walked up the stair
> After a gaiety prolonged and rare . . .

The change 'was introduced to exonerate the guilty Hardy from his neglect'. What jury would acquit after that? Armed with such evidence, Gittings cannot resist acting as counsel for the prosecution, it seems, however sympathetic he is to the prisoner in the dock who, like all persons in that position, begins to take on a curiously faceless and anonymous character.

Yet if Hardy tends to disappear under Gittings's treatment, the women in his life come into their own. Emma and Florence Dugdale are alive in his pages as nowhere else, as if they had acquired the personal individuality lost in the main figure. There is a certain justice in this, which Hardy in his self-effacing way would be the first grimly to welcome; and as the most full and sympathetic study of the women in his life the biography justifies itself ten times over. Gittings points out how literary were the tastes both of Emma and Florence, and how both saw themselves becoming authors, in a modest way, in partnership with their husband. Both were disillusioned. Hardy was only too willing to encourage a girl he was in love with but, once married, he tended to lose interest.

Gittings is surely right to claim on the strength of her two essays – 'The Egyptian Pet' and 'In Praise of Calais', as well as 'Some Recollections' – that Emma possessed a much more considerable if eccentric talent than the brightly and obviously literary Florence, with her children's verses and stories. There seems no doubt that the two stories she had published in the *Cornhill*, 'The Apotheosis of the Minx' and 'Blue Jilly the Horse Stealer', were ghosted by Hardy, who probably wrote the latter entirely. No doubt Hardy also appreciated the fact that a close connection of Florence was the brother of Bram Stoker, the author of *Dracula*. Was he also amused that his Gifford brother-in-law, long confined in an asylum, started to write an immense verse epic on the Napoleonic wars at the same time that he began *The Dynasts*?

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Mark Elvin

Clientage

Feudalism by JOHN CRITCHLEY *Allen & Unwin* £6.95

The title of John Critchley's book should not be *Feudalism* but *'Feudalism'*, because his subject is not an institution but a word. He describes each relationship and set of attitudes that some historian has called 'feudal' and carefully distinguishes them from others carrying the same label. The geographical range covered in this exercise is breathtaking. The reader is taken back and forth between the ancient Near East, medieval Japan, Western Europe, Malaya, Spanish America, Russia, Ethiopia, Byzantium, Islam, India, and early Ireland. The contrasts are drawn in purely institutional terms, however. There is no reference to the differences between the societies in economic development, or in their techniques of production, communication and warfare. Nor does he consider the causes of change whereby 'feudal' institutions came into being and, in due course, perished. The result is disconcerting: a monograph that is sophisticated and simplistic at the same time.

The aim seems to be to persuade us to jettison the word. It is, Critchley says, 'easily avoided', and 'it may be doubted whether a term to which so many different meanings have been attached for so long can have a useful part to play'. One can only agree that it has, on occasion, been grotesquely abused, notably by communist Chinese historians trying to fit the distinctive history of their country into the uniform Europocentric pattern decreed by Stalin. But should we get rid of it altogether? As a historian, I have certainly found some use for the idea of 'a decentralised political power-structure built upon personal relationships between members of a predominantly military class, and usually held together by the assignment of sources of revenue to subordinates in return for the discharge of obligations'. It doesn't seem to me unreasonable to call this 'feudalism' for short, so long as we are careful to distinguish it from seigneurial structures of an economic kind. These we may define as structures founded upon 'the limited exploitation of a complex of means of production and producers (for example, land and the peasants attached to it) through services and payments not determined by exchange in a market but by law, custom, and in the last resort coercion'. For these, 'seigneurial economy' or 'manorialism' can serve as possible if not ideal labels.

Critchley appears to be saying (but maybe only appears) that such general formulations are useful only for comparative studies, and that these latter are worthless. 'Comparative studies', he tells us, 'have been responsible for a great deal of nonsense', and 'a society is best understood in terms of what is happening and has happened to it, not by comparisons with others'. Since no justification is offered for this proposition, I don't intend to try to controvert it at length. The example of Max Weber (or even of Robert Bellah, whose *Tokugawa Religion* Critchley calls a 'classic') is enough to render it suspect.

I suggest that the charitable ignore Critchley's remarks quoted above – all of which are in the preface – on the plausible supposition of a fit of bad temper. The rest of the book should be regarded as a valuable preliminary to the reformulation of part of the comparative historian's vocabulary, turning on the central point that 'feudalism' has been used to cover at least six types of socio-political relationship which, though often in partial combination, are separable in fact and theory.

The first of these is the idea of fief as a 'property held in return for services'. The late Byzantine *pronoia*, the Ottoman *timar*, and the Russian *pomestie* are instanced as well-known non-Western examples of such service-tenure. The second is the relationship between lord and vassal, derived from and still somewhat similar to that between a military leader and his warrior followers. Critchley shows that this was sometimes combined with fief-holding, as in Western Europe and medieval Japan, and sometimes not. Correct though this is, the argument is occasionally strained. It is misleading to say of the *pomestniki* that 'they were not warrior followers in any sense of the word' when, prior to the Petrine reforms, they had to turn up to fight for the tsar with their retinues at their backs.

The third idea is the decentralisation of power, particularly the devolution of justice and revenue-collection to powerful local magnates. Enjoyment of these powers was not necessarily connected with fief-holding, but since they were often granted for service (even military service in traditional Ethiopia) Critchley may be creating more of a contrast here than is warranted. The fourth concept is of feudalism as a limited absorption through conquest of previously independent magnates or rulers, institutionalised by means of infeudation, tributary status, or indirect rule. Examples are the Parthian empire, some of the medieval African empires, Manchu rule over many of their non-Chinese territories (my own illustration), and parts of post-Lugard Africa. 'The feudalisation of political relationships', Critchley observes, 'meant that the nobility lost as well as gained power.' There were centripetal as well as centrifugal aspects.

Another distinct relationship sometimes assimilated to 'feudalism' is that between patron and client. Characteristically the client was without resources in his own right, and so much more dependent on his superior's favour and protection than was a vassal. But, as Critchley's case-histories show, the term 'clientage' has become only somewhat less protean than 'feudalism' itself. It has been used of the traditional bonds between the Tutsi and the Hutu peoples in Ruanda and Burundi, where 'the rules developed to classify rights in cattle mirrored those which governed the tenure of land elsewhere'. It has been applied (apparently) not only to conventional military retainers but also to the adherents of Japanese labour-contractors, the inferior castes involved in the Indian *jajmani* system of caste-based exchanges of services and gifts, and to successful candidates in the imperial Chinese civil-service examinations permanently beholden to the examiner.

The last institutional variable is serfdom. In France, Critchley argues, 'serfdom was a relatively insignificant feature of feudal lordship by comparison with seigneurial rights of justice and monopoly which affected everyone'. In Eastern Europe, of course, it was much more important, and in Sung China there were serfs working large estates which were not fiefs and which were owned by bureaucrats and scholar-gentry that no non-marxist could conceivably describe as 'feudal'. Some marxists also see as 'feudal' the unequal landownership that emerged after servile dependency ended in China in the 17th century, and in Eastern Europe and the Americas in the 19th. Here, too, there is little connection with the other components of 'feudalism'.

Besides this basic case for a tightening of terminology, *Feudalism* has a nice dry humour – see the note on the poor German peasants complaining that it was always they who had to provide the firewood when someone was burnt at the stake. There are also some bitter asides that break through the usually restrained tone – after a strong ruler, 'the next generation forgets the bloodletting and remembers chiefly a time when men could travel without being robbed'. This is an interesting book, containing much to challenge the intellect.

Graham Hough

Revisionary

William Morris: The Marxist Dreamer by PAUL MEIER *Harvester Press* 2 vols £28.50

There is a good book buried somewhere here, but it lies beneath two crushing loads. The first is the paraphernalia of the French doctoral thesis. This makes it necessary to recapitulate what everyone knows already before going on to whatever fresh contribution is to be made. And if there are 20 possible examples to illustrate a point, they must all go in. The result here is 600 pages of text and 140 of annotation to do what could reasonably have been done at a third of that length. The other burden is an evangelical marxist piety. Professor Meier seems to have been brought up in some sort of communist convent where he has been sheltered from the various wickednesses of the world. He knows of course about the corruption of the bourgeoisie, since this is part of the standard demonology, but he is repeatedly horrified and amazed to find 19th-century England so thickly populated with Christians, idealists, reformists and Fabians; and denunciation of these false prophets occupies a good deal of his space.

The object of his work is to analyse Morris's conception of the society of the future, to be seen chiefly in *News from Nowhere* – Morris's utopian vision, to use

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the terms in which it is generally discussed. Meier is willing to use these terms too, but his ambition is to disinfect them. He aims to show that Morris's utopia is not unreal but a sober political prediction, that his vision is not dream-like but a scientific calculus of probabilities. His method – and this soon becomes an end in itself – is to show at every turn that Morris's ideas are of impeccable marxist orthodoxy; and since this constitutes a body of revealed truth, the accuracy of his projections for the future needs no further demonstration.

The main purpose is not achieved, and it is hard to see how it could have been. Morris described *News from Nowhere* as 'some chapters from a utopian romance'. Surely he underplays it; it is something stronger than this – a powerful ideological tract supported by an age-old myth. It is also the only habitable utopia in our history. But it is a wild leap to see this haunting fable, with its gaps, its nostalgias, its evasion of unsolved and probably insoluble problems, as the logical outcome of scientific socialism. Morris's strictly political thinking is another matter; and Meier is completely successful in showing that it is both marxist in inspiration and of surprising ideological purity. To be sure, this was not unknown. If I may utter a faint squeak for myself, I said it plainly enough in *The Last Romantics* in 1949; and since E. P. Thompson's monumental study of Morris in 1958 there has been no remaining doubt about the nature of his convictions.

Why should there ever have been any doubt about something that is perfectly evident to any reader of Morris's political writings? There are reasons. Morris's working life spanned 40 years, and it was only in the last 12 of them, from 1884 to 1896, that he was active in socialist politics. His earlier poetry contains not even the seeds of political engagement, and his earlier career as a craftsman was a practical working-out of Ruskinian principles – an allegiance that he never renounced. Behind Ruskin stands Carlyle, to whom he also pays tribute. So those who want to see Morris as continuing the tradition of these two Victorian giants have strong justification.

However, there have been some real distortions. Mackail, Morris's first biographer, was a man of letters who regarded the socialism of Morris's later years as an aberration and did everything he could to play it down. The other misleading authority is Bruce Glasier, who wrote a book on Morris and early socialism in 1921. Glasier was a sentimental Scotch socialist of the cloaked, hair-tossing, Ramsay MacDonald breed; and though he preserves many authentic memories he is only too anxious to re-create Morris in his own cloudy image. His obliquities have been ably analysed by E. P. Thompson, and Meier follows Thompson, with an additional note of shocked consternation which is extremely comic. What but calumny, he asks, could be expected of a man like Glasier, who finished up as a Theosophist and, worse still, 'accepted a paid post as a propagandist for the Fabian Society'?

There are few clouds about Morris's position. After an early flirtation with high Anglicanism he quite undramatically gave up religion altogether. Any sort of transcendental philosophy was meaningless to him. This world and its joys and sorrows were enough, as he repeatedly said. He was quite clear that the roots of social life are economic, and that the roots of our ideas are in our social life. When Morris read *Capital* in 1883, Marx seemed to sharpen and clarify ideas that were already latent in him. He completely accepted the class war as the motive for social change and that its culmination was to be a violent revolution. Any thought of reconciliation between the existing classes was an illusion. Politically, in short, Morris was a hard-line communist of the old school, and his contempt for idealists, Christian Socialists and reformists was open and complete.

The part of *News from Nowhere* that describes how the change came is a sober account of a social revolution in the marxist manner. Much of it has happened or can be seen happening still in the world today. The succeeding phase of state socialism, which Morris regards as a necessary but distasteful interregnum, is very lightly passed over. He is eager to get on to the final phase, when the state has withered away. And all at once both the tone and the mechanism of the story change completely. The sharp social analysis disappears. There is no attempt to study the forces really at work. Vast urban masses have dwindled to village co-operatives. Economic planning is of a charming simplicity:

> We are a shoemaking community chiefly, you cotton-spinners, are we making too many shoes? Shall we turn some of us to gardening for a month or two, or shall we go on?

International complications are settled in the same easy way. Greed and aggression have vanished, along with dirty factories and repetitive labour. We are told vaguely, 'All work which it would be irksome to do by hand is done by immensely improved machinery; and in all work which it is a pleasure to do by hand machinery is done without.' How the machinery is made and how the power is generated without irksome and inartistic work by somebody does not appear. This is the golden age, projected into the future. On Morris's time-scale it is due in about 100 years from now.

The latter part of Meier's book is a meticulous exposition of these chapters of *News from Nowhere*, enlarged and illustrated from Morris's strictly political writings. It is done very fairly. But this scrupulous scholarship is used in the service of a fundamentalism so antiquated that it is hard to know how to take it. At first it seems merely quaint for Professor Meier to write as though subsequent history had been nothing but a literal unfolding of marxian prophecies. His refusal to see a gleam of light or virtue in the works of any rival prophet seems merely an overstrained piety. But when we consider all the other things he has refused to see – when we notice that the ghastly detritus communist progress has thrown up on its way, from the liquidation of the kulaks to the Gulag Archipelago, gets not the slightest mention in these pages – his tone becomes less excusable. Morris's robust and untried faith, transferred unmodified to our time, becomes an unctuous conformity.

Paul Johnson

Supranational

Memoirs by JEAN MONNET *Collins* £13
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Undoubtedly the great national success-story of the last 20 years has been the French recovery. 'The sick man of Europe', as we used to call her, has been transformed into a formidably self-confident nation, with an almost completely new industrial base, a high growth-rate, a strong currency and an enviable record of political stability. These are not characteristics one had ever associated with France and the phenomenon takes some explaining, if indeed it can be explained. J. R. Frears, who lectures in French politics at Loughborough University, persuades me that the key to the improvement lies in the constitutional changes which General de Gaulle introduced in 1958, and continued in 1962, when he persuaded France to switch to presidential election by direct universal suffrage. The essence of the Fifth Republic is that it strengthens the executive at the expense of parliament. But parliament remains important, and the system might not have

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worked if it had slipped out of presidential control, or split into warring fragments.

Instead, election by single-member constituencies with two ballots (as opposed to the complex and inequitable PR used in the Fourth Republic) allowed the creation of a homogeneous majority and something approaching a two-party system. Presidential elections and referenda made possible direct public choice, and it can be argued that the constitution as a whole is both more democratic than our own and more conducive to continuity of policy. All this Mr Frears explains with admirable lucidity, and he provides a full and authoritative analysis of the political parties and the elections they have contested over the past two decades. Anyone who is taking seriously the fascinating election France is holding this month will find his study indispensable.

Mr Frears, however, is describing the framework of success, not the content. To take a 17th-century analogy, De Gaulle and his constitution restored the authority of the state in the same way that the young Louis XIV erased the memory of the Fronde. But authority is not enough. Who was De Gaulle's Colbert? The answer I think is not Antoine Pinay, De Gaulle's first Finance Minister, nor his most durable one, Giscard d'Estaing, but rather that great European insider figure, Jean Monnet. For it is important to grasp that the groundwork for the economic success of the Fifth Republic was firmly laid under the Fourth – the Fifth providing the political stability to allow French post-war economic planning to come to fruition. And the crucial step was, again, taken by De Gaulle when at the end of the war he gave Monnet and his disciples full authority to set up the Commissariat du Plan.

Monnet and De Gaulle were, of course, very dissimilar people: they saw the world with different eyes, as Monnet makes very clear in these memoirs. He was and is a patriot, but never a romantic one. He comes from Cognac, where his family owned a small brandy firm. Many of the leading Cognac families are of foreign origin and they have always exported their products all over the world. Monnet grew up in an atmosphere of small-town conservatism (the industry is exceptionally old-fashioned, or was in those days) but with beckoning international horizons. At 16 he went to London to learn English and work in the City. A young businessman at the outbreak of the first world war, he virtually forced his way into the office of the Prime Minister, Viviani, and persuaded him to set up a new system of Anglo-French economic coordination. Thus Monnet was launched on his lifework: persuading nations to do wise things together instead of foolish things separately.

Monnet's memoirs are in no way vivid. They are plain, workmanlike, full of meat; a very characteristic performance. He has no frills, no egotism. He does not believe in gestures or political theatre. He says he does not mind repeating himself to the point of boredom so long as he finally gets his message across. He has immense clarity of mind. His plans are usually very simple in essence. His great strength is persistence, which reflects an inflexible, but unostentatious, will. He also has a sharp talent for picking young men of like mind and comparable ability. The scope and productivity of his career is impressive by any standards. After his wartime supply work, he went to Paris and Geneva to set up the League of Nations. That done, he went into investment banking in New York and Europe. In Warsaw he managed a successful American scheme to rescue the Polish zloty, and later the Rumanian currency too. He returned briefly to Cognac to save from bankruptcy the family firm. Then to California, where, he says, he had made and lost a considerable fortune by the early 1930s. In 1932 he was in Sweden, clearing up the mess of Ivan Kreuger's matchbox empire. Then to China, where he brought into existence an indigenous investment bank.

In the late Thirties, horrified by Germany's preponderance in airpower, Monnet embarked on a successful campaign to persuade Roosevelt to produce military aircraft for the Allies. He was on the spot in London, in June 1940, to induce Churchill to make his astonishing appeal to France to merge nationalities. This was the only occasion, it seems to me, that Monnet's supranational urge took a utopian turn, though he would argue that such seizing of opportune moments sometimes avoids years of hard grind. As a rule, however, it has always been hard grind for Monnet. He is a nuts-and-bolts man. He had a useful war, persuading the Allies to merge their interests in achieving the maximum production, and it was therefore natural for De Gaulle to pick him for the job of rebuilding France's ancient and shattered economy.

It was a very fortunate choice all the same, for Monnet has no political ambitions as such, shuns the limelight and does not make enemies. He is first and last an economic diplomat. He set up the planning machinery and got it working with remarkably little fuss. Having done that, it was logical to move on to the international plane, and create first the Steel-Coal Pool, and later the EEC. By the time this came into existence, the new French economy was turning over very smoothly indeed, and so France of course has become the outstanding beneficiary of European union. Monnet is disappointed at the slow progress towards political union but he is in no way despondent. Why should he be? Few men have come closer to achieving their aims, set out plainly and steadfastly pursued, in their own lifetime.

There is not much philosophy in this book, and no ideology. I doubt if Monnet has any. It is virtually impossible to put this banker-planner into either the capitalist or the socialist camp. He seems to have got on as well with Benoît Frachon, the communist union boss, as he did with John Foster Dulles. He has a few rules of thumb. Thus he believes in small staffs: at the French planning office he had only 30 senior officials in all. Modernisation, he thinks, is 'a state of mind'. He dislikes rhetoric but he is very insistent on getting the drafting right. He inspires remarkable loyalty in the people who work for him. Whether Monnet is the great benefactor of Europe and mankind his admirers claim remains to be seen, but he has certainly rendered more substantial services to his nation than any Frenchman of his times, De Gaulle alone excepted.

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The Fragmented Life of Don Jacobo Lerner by ISAAC GOLDEMBERG *Sidgwick & Jackson* £3.95
Monday Lunch in Fairyland by ANGELA HUTH *Collins* £4.50

With these reissues, in the wake of *Lancelot* and *The Moviegoer*, the Walker Percy terrain is fully mapped out. His apocalyptic comedies suggest parallels from Poe to Kesey, but it is now clear that the principal comparison must be with Faulkner: with his baroque South, his mad, sad Southerners, his ferocious burlesque and elegant rhodomontade, and, unfortunately, with his gargantuan longueurs. Will Barrett, the 'last gentleman' from the Mississippi Delta, is, like Quentin Compson, the product of a self-destructive family. His father 'was killed by the strain of living out an ordinary day in a perfect dance of honour'. The last of the line, Will, 'does not know how to live his life'. Infinite possibilities seem open to him, so he does nothing. Plagued by fits of amnesia and an uncanny intuitive power, he is at once courteously adaptable and entirely without a sense of himself. His baffled New York psychiatrist reproves him for treating a therapy group like a Southern social: 'This is not a catfish fry.'

Will's complaisance attracts him to the macabre Alabaman Vaught family, whose 'gentleman' he becomes. The father, a millionaire Chevrolet-agency owner, whose wife thinks that the Civil War was caused by a conspiracy of Jewish bankers, hires him as a companion for his son Jamie, who is dying of leukaemia, with prospects of marriage to Kitty ('a lovely fine fragrant Chi Omega') and a job in the firm. But Will is also put to use by Jamie's sister Val, a vindictive nun, his brother Sutter, a Messianic sybarite who believes in 'lewdness' as the only reality in an age of unbelief, and Sutter's frustrated ex-wife Rita. Types of the rich, squalid, violent South, the Vaughts suffer from everything Will lacks: money, sex, love and hatred. By the end he has made use of them to find himself; but long before then the novel has come adrift, its splendid comedy and moving treatment of lost youth sunk under the obsession with Sutter's 'message'.

The embarrassments of visionary axe-grinding also spoil *Love in the Ruins*, a futuristic farce set in Paradise, Louisiana, where 'Thomas More', a 'bad Catholic, a widower and cuckold', a mental patient and a psychiatrist – the mad scientist of Gothic tradition – has invented a 'lapsometer', which can diagnose the levels of rage, fear, desire etc. in the brain, and with which he hopes to redeem fallen man and 'weld the broken self whole'. The need for such treatment is pressing: it's become apparent that

'the USA didn't work'. Weeds push up through crumbling motels, Bantu guerrillas try to take over the South, the States have been at war with Ecuador for 15 years, and in Paradise the 'Gerry Rehab' centre, where the sadness of old age fails to be cured, rubs shoulders with the 'Love Clinic', complete with Observer Stimulation Overflow Area. During wild scenes of increasing disorder, the lapsometer falls into the wrong hands and Paradise comes to grief. Tom More's attempt to control his three-sided affair with Lola, Moira and nurse Ellen, who 'burgeons with marriageable Presbyterianism', ends in a cosy domestic scene, the kind yearned for by Will Barrett: every Southern gentleman's dream of hominy grits and a big brass bed.

Both novels are very funny, and both are distinguished by an elegant, exotic language ('Killdeers went crying along the fallow fields where tough shallow spider-webs were scattered like saucers') which bears up well under comparison with Faulkner. It's a pity that the harangues on politics and morality make one come away with the glazed eyes of a Wedding Guest.

Faulkner, though, is a more life-giving model than Dos Passos, whose collage methods – now very old hat – seem to have inspired Goldemberg's novel about Jews in Peru in the Thirties. The life of Jacobo Lerner, who left Russia for Lima in 1921, is rendered through newspaper cuttings about racial and cultural attitudes in Peru, monologues by Jacobo's friends and family, and lists of facts in which the historical and the fictional are carefully blurred. Stories of horrible suffering duly emerge through the objective treatment, and a poignant picture of a deracinated community is evidently intended. But the novel's methods do not create interest for Jacobo. As an ethnic documentary it is intriguing, but as a novel it is depressingly hollow and unmoving – and dull, too. This may be the fault of a relentlessly stiff translation. Here is a boy impressing his girlfriend's family by getting a bicycle: 'The acquisition of this vehicle stimulated even further the admiration that Bertila's brothers felt toward Jacobo, in spite of the ferocious criticism that Dona Jesus sent in his direction.'

You know you are back in England with Angela Huth's stories because the upper-class characters are called Romilly, Crispin, and Kestrel Beauford, while the working-class ones are called Loaf, or Muriel. The upper classes have breakfast in the Connaught and gourmet holidays in France. The stories about their sexual intrigues are full of 'cunning' little twists, like the one about the jealous husband whose wife, whom he has suspected with a Russian lecturer at Oxford ('She and the brute don lay on an anonymous bed . . .'), turns out to be innocent: she has been taking skating lessons, not dons. The other stories are more shocking, as befits the subject matter. A nymphomaniac farmer's daughter is sent away to a special school; an old widower is tempted by pornographic books; and a local *fête is wrecked* by a busload of female lunatics. The crassness of these class distinctions is matched by the cheap clichés of the style: 'Her hair was misted with raindrops . . . He wondered if she noticed the quaver in his voice.'

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

John Coleman

Swinging Low

Looking for Mr Goodbar (X) *Plaza 1*
The Boys in Company C (X) *ABC 2, Shaftesbury Avenue*
Dark Star (A) *Screen on the Green*
The Baker's Bread *ICA*
The Four Feathers (U) *Warner West End*
The Wages of Fear (AA) *Empire*
Holocaust 2000 (X) *London Pavilion*
You Light Up My Life (A) *Columbia*

It is almost as if Richard Brooks, in his mid-sixties, had decided to rejuvenate his image: on the face of it, *Looking for Mr Goodbar* is his most daring and swinging movie to date. Unfortunately, save for one stand-out performance, on the face of it is where most of the action stays. Brooks himself scripted (after all, that is how he started out in films), from Judith Rossner's best-seller, and in so doing has created a number of problems for Brooks the director. The book told a coherent tale of no particular merit: about Theresa Dunn, a young teacher in New York, a lapsed Catholic with a slight spinal curvature left over from childhood polio, a loner given to frequenting singles bars and easy pick-ups till a last, fatal lay on New Year's Day, 1970. If one disregards its stylistic inertness, the doom-fiction had two things going for it: a sense of the metropolitan American Sixties when the weed flourished and women's emancipation bloomed; and a woman's view of casual sex. It supplied Theresa with some motivation for her apparently double life. What Brooks has done is to walk gingerly around these matters of sibling rivalry and a stifling upbringing while offering a strident sound-track (no fewer than ten songs) and several jarring episodes of Theresa's fantasising: he also sentimentalises her job by having her teach deaf kids to speak; he is hamfisted in his heavy stress on material already verbally and physically crude.

The saving grace is Diane Keaton as Theresa. It would seem an impossible part to play at a level other than the lubricious, and yet while she is on screen, which is most of the time, that stricken joyousness which is her speciality, the ability to run one mood into another like sliding down the banisters, dominates everything and everybody: or nearly. There is a rueful heigh-ho in the way she looks at the naked bodies of her sister, brother-in-law and two friends, sprawled on a bed the morning after, that is beautifully speaking. (Incidentally, Ms Rossner wrote of the other couple: 'Rafe and Marvella seemed to have sprung full-blown from the mind of someone planning the second half of the 20th-century' – and that is the quality both novel and film catch at their best moments.) There is also a wonderful wantonness about Ms Keaton, as if – though this is mined territory – Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* had been voicing fears about the thoroughly sexual woman to be liberated in the present film. Until she takes on more than she can cope with and is stabbed to death in melodramatic fashion, a blue flicker-light going on, off, on, off and her still face receding, she ups her skirts and straddles with a will and, weirdly, an innocence. Her predatory victims are an English prof and an Italian stud; her complete victim, who loses his condom at which her merry laughter peals helplessly out, is a gentle social worker; her murderer a crazed bisexual. The air is generally blue with fricatives and Oedipal forms of address. It is largely an unpleasant affair, but Diane Keaton does her sweet damnedest to make you swallow it. Mr Goodbar, by the way, is simply a bar.

Of *The Boys in Company C*, which is even more bespattered with cuss-words, I can only raise grateful hands heavenwards that it was directed by Sidney J. Furie and not by Robert Aldrich, who would have made a vomit of it. We had Henry Jaglom's *Tracks* recently, the scatty musings of a Vietnam veteran, but this is the first on-the-spot 'Nam' movie in what threatens to be a flood. It takes a bunch of men, of whom we get to know a handful quite well, through basic training up to actual hostilities and a soccer match. All goes soft towards the end, with hard men weeping over the body of a little Vietnamese girl, a scribbling buddy whose posthumous diary we are supposed to be witnessing. The relentless obscenities and indignities of boot camp are, however, unsparingly authentic (script by Rick Natkin, much re-hashed on location in the Philippines). Taunting a tough black rookie, Washington (excellent Stan Shaw) with his beads, a sergeant asks, 'What do you have in your pocket there? Lipstick?' A flick-knife materialises at lightning speed. The mean cat, Washington, intending to continue with his drug-pushing scene in the Marines, is quickly spotted as a leader: and, later, drops the idea in favour of saving his fellow-men. Most notable among these are a hippie (Craig Wasson), a randy Italian (Michael Lembeck), the would-be writer (James Canning) and a clear-headed lieutenant (James Whitmore Jr). Furie brings off the difficult task of giving his cast individuality with considerable craft; nor is there anything contemptible about his control of the action episodes. It all remains well this side of *M*A*S*H*, even when a pretend body-count is faked at the expense of a few million dollars' worth of explosives raining down on a deserted hill. A pity that a sloganising sogginess creeps into the last reel. The old liberal message of the futility and ugliness of war, and of this one in particular, was never in doubt, anyway.

John Carpenter's first feature, *Dark Star*,

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has already had an airing on the small box but looks better on the big screen. Not that a great deal happens. This is an object lesson, in fact, in *using* a minimal number of objects, and men (four, to be precise, plus a stiff), to populate an imaginative universe. Carpenter wrote the script with Dan O'Bannon, who is also credited with the ingenious special effects and production design as well as playing an aggrieved, goonish mechanic, 20 years out in space by mistake. This Pinback has hair-raising adventures with a claw-footed rubber inflatable and a lift-shaft, delivers himself of a flat-voiced harangue to a recording machine – 'I do not like the men on this spaceship' (they even ignored his last birthday) – and is the little occasion's deadpan centre. There is a soft-spoken, ultra-polite female computer and there is a prissy-toned bomb finally engaged in a phenomenological disputation with the ship's captain as the machine threatens to malfunction and detonate.

Brevities: Erwin Keusch's *The Baker's Bread*, a first feature again, is fascinating on the manual details of the craft, engaging on the plight of the small baker and the love-affairs of an apprentice. Nutritious. Don Sharp's *The Four Feathers*, a pallid bore with Beau Bridges monumentally miscast as errant Feversham and awful stock footage, should strictly be returned to the birds. Fifth version. Repetitious. William Friedkin's lopped and disowned *The Wages of Fear* is dedicated to Henri-Georges Clouzot of the 1953 original. Injudicious. Alberto de Martino's *Holocaust 2000* is satanism crossed with thermonuclear tosh, Kirk Douglas and Simon Ward. Superstitious. Produced, directed and written (including songs) by Joseph Brooks, *You Light Up My Life* is about a plainish young aspirant singer and her Borsch Belt comic father and almost did for a toughish reel or so. Then weepsville. Inauspicious.

Television–1

Russell Davies

Other Channels

I have a guilty conscience again about neglecting ITV. It's not that I never watch it – although living in the Anglia region is admittedly a disincentive. Their own programmes are mostly to do with old farm implements and the natural history of coypu and bittern; their ads are almost exclusively to do with new farm implements, and weedkiller; their films are the most abominable selections on any network; and, worst of all, they don't buy *What the Papers Say* (Granada), so my neighbours are unaware that for fifteen minutes every three months, I slip out of these old clothes and become Mediaman. Anglia do do a reasonable play every so often, but these seem often to be staid affairs set in country houses. I doubt, for example, whether they'd have put on Peter Smith's *Partisans*, an 'ITV Playhouse' from ATV. They might have been right at that: the play had an incompletely thought-through feel, with hysteria coming at you from several angles – the dissatisfied executive, the wife desperate for action, the General Strike piling up the rubbish in great black sacks on the street outside. All this and a car accident to finish. It was almost like Thomas Hardy. Much the best thing about it was a spiffing performance by Alison Fiske as the dangerously frustrated *hausfrau*. Ms Fiske has a wonderful command of the seriously bitchy end of the Penelope Keith spectrum, and her handsome looks help a lot. The scenes of marital disharmony in this play (directed by the author) were upsettingly good – too good for the play. The caustic weed of a husband was played by Jonathan Pryce.

I do watch *Coronation Street* (Granada) because something of the cheery-insult Mancunian way of life survives in it, but I haven't enjoyed it much lately. The contractual death of Ernie Bishop seems to have knocked the conviction out of it for the time being. *Crown Court* (Granada) is something I watch as a cheap alternative to buying *Spotlight*, the actors' directory; for this programme is surely the Piccadilly Circus of the acting profession. If you watch it long enough, you will sooner or later see everybody who is anybody (unless they're a truly international Somebody). An old English master of mine has long been taking turns to be the Court Usher ('Take the book in your right hand', etc). It's most instructive to see who gets cast as a criminal, who as a judge, who the barristers are. On the screen, by the way, women are more compelling advocates than men.

Warming up the set before *Coronation Street* generally entails watching *Opportunity Knocks* (Thames) and *This is Yer Leyfe* (Thames), whose most recent coup was to give Max Boyce the red-book treatment exactly a week *before* St David's Day. Perhaps the show had the Prince of Wales lined up for 1 March, however. As for Hughie Green, he now seems to have the idea that everybody hates him; but what's really enraging to most of us about him is that there are people who actually like his weary programme. Most of them must be in old folks' homes. Certainly watching *Opportunity Knocks* is much like being entertained in an institution. One is treated as though one were not all there. 'Thank you Meli Sande,' barks the maestro. 'She spells it M.E.L.I. – *sand*', he further explains. Even *Looks Familiar* (Thames), a former afternoon show moved into prime-time for its 100th Edition, has a touch of this senile dementia. The excellent Denis Norden (who is sometimes a bit ponderous on the box, as he most certainly isn't on radio; it's something to do with the Javanese hand-gestures) regularly closes the programme with a definition of middle age, but it almost sounds to me like an evocation of the doddermost octogenarianism.

As excruciating as any of these is *Mr and Mrs* (Border), the guessing game about hubby's habits and wifey's little ways. However, this show has the unique distinction of being almost worth watching for its hostess, of all things, a Miss Susan Cuff. If I were a Cumbrian teenager, I'd be smitten, I would. Smitten. But I am old, I am old.

Television–2

David Lomax

Interviewing Idi

Ever since I got back from interviewing President Idi Amin in Uganda for the BBC's *Tonight* programme, friends have been asking whether I felt frightened of the man while I was talking to him. 'Weren't you scared that you would all become crocodile meat?' colleagues inquire, as if they were disappointed that we weren't; or, alternatively, 'Didn't it occur to you that you could all wind up in a fridge?' I am not at all sure how to answer these questions. It is obviously quite an undertaking to be invited to converse with Caligula in his cave and there is also, of course, a slight temptation to assume the role of the brave returning hunter who clutches a trophy others readily admire. The truth, as usual, is less glamorous but perhaps more interesting.

There is no particular secret about getting an interview with President Amin. If he wants to talk to the world other than through the medium of Uganda Radio or the personal telegram to world leaders (a technique which seems to have fallen from favour recently), he is pleased to agree to a request, and ours happened to coincide with the visit of a senior delegation from Kenya whose presence Amin was keen to publicise. He has always had a love-hate relationship with the British, and this seems to go for the BBC as well. We hoped to catch him in the former mood.

Entebbe airport had not changed very much since the last time I had seen it. On that occasion we had also been invited to Uganda to film an interview with the President, but after staying in a hotel in Kampala for four days we were suddenly asked to leave without any reason; which is of course what we did. This time we had been told by telex that our request for an interview had been granted and so felt more optimistic. With producer Jack Saltman and an Asian freelance film crew from Nairobi, Mahommed Amin and Awan Saif, I had to wait at Entebbe for about three hours for transport to Kampala. We were then installed in our hotel with two young officials from the Ministry of Information who claimed that they were administrative officers and were normally responsible for 'welfare'. Dressed in beautifully cut suits, they were to be our constant companions for the next three days. They spent most of the time telling me what great things His Excellency had done for Uganda and how we should not believe all those stories in the papers by Ugandan exiles.

Reading the most gory cuttings about Uganda while actually inside the country was a strange experience. It was obvious at once that there had been a good deal of exaggeration down in Fleet Street. I read that there were hardly any cars in Kampala and that construction work had come to a halt. Outside the hotel there was a deafening noise every morning when work started

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on extensions to the Bank of Uganda and the Post Office, and it was often quite difficult to cross the main road because of the traffic. Who are all these people with new Mercedes? When I was here last, Kampala was a drab place. Most of the shops were bare and it was difficult even to buy a cup of coffee in the country where they actually grow the stuff. Today the shops that were once owned by Asians are back in business, though their window-displays do seem a bit skimpy and there is not much variety. What seems to have happened is that Uganda has prospered by last year's astonishing coffee prices and His Excellency has been able to buy Boeing 707s with cash and fly them to Europe with black gold so that they can return with consumer goods. Stanstead is not the only destination and the aircraft carry more than just whisky for the Ugandan Officers' Mess.

On the second day we were taken to Nile Mansions, a hotel block of luxury apartments built for the OAU Conference in Kampala, equipped with a collection of delicate water-colours in a style which I can only describe as tropical abstract, vast portraits of the Life President seen in a variety of jovial poses, and a huge lobby in which there were rows of imported armchairs. We were told that we would have to wait; and we did – for one-and-a-half days. His Excellency the Life President, as our guides always called him, was due to appear at any moment, so I took the opportunity to reflect on all those newspaper cuttings.

The most difficult question is to decide where to draw the line between the clown/monster portrayed by the popular press, a man who is alleged to have committed the vilest personal atrocities on his enemies, and the other image of a tough leader who is merely misunderstood, the victim of the propaganda of his unscrupulous opponents in exile. I have talked to many of these exiles when thousands of refugees crossed into Kenya last year from the Acholi and Langi tribes. Most were in a very distressed and emotional state, but there is no doubt that the scenes which they independently described actually took place. The cumulative weight of the evidence which has emerged from Uganda established long ago that an appalling number of people have been bumped off in one way or another, and it is impossible to imagine that all this could have happened without Big Daddy's knowledge. The clowning and the more colourful anecdotes merely obscure what is bad enough in any case, but they also help to make President Amin a focus for all the worst sort of racialism in Britain.

The Big Man finally appeared, flanked by a party of ministers and bodyguards, on his way to address the Kenyan delegation who had come for talks about border difficulties, coffee-smuggling and the remaining assets of the defunct East African Community. President Amin obviously wants to mend his fences and restore his tarnished image, hoping perhaps that Britain will resume diplomatic relations. At least that was the impression he made when he appeared for our film interview later in the day. I told him that I would ask him about some of the worst things which had been said abroad about his regime and, to his credit, he did manage to keep his temper when faced with specific detail. But, throughout, we were all conscious of a feeling that he could suddenly change his mind, that he would stop referring to our Asian cameraman as his best friend, and that something unpleasant could easily happen. Whenever he made a joke he would search the assembled company of guides, bodyguards and advisers with eager eyes, and everyone else would laugh too. He *is* funny, but there is a tension at the same time, and when he utters cheerful denials to questions about mass killings you wonder whether there is the slightest chance that he will be allowed to die in his bed.

'Why did we always listen to the lies of the exiles?' he asked. Instead of weeping for Mrs Bloch, who was an Israeli responsibility, why didn't we ask about the 20 Ugandan soldiers who had been killed in the Entebbe raid? Didn't we realise that all that trouble with Dennis Hills's manuscript was a ploy to get Mr Callaghan to visit Uganda and wasn't it good diplomacy? Didn't we know that all the world was talking about Big Daddy at the time of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference last year and all the time he was in Kampala with his adviser, Major Bob Astles, enjoying the joke?

The Life President also asked whether I was frightened to come to Uganda and talk to the 'Conqueror of the British Empire'. I told him that we didn't have an Empire any longer – but perhaps that was sidestepping the question.

This English

May we call your attention to an increasingly common habit of mispunctuation – the yob's comma? The yob's comma, of course, has no syntactical value: it is the equivalent of a fuddled gasp for breath, as the poor writer marshals his battered thoughts. By a happy coincidence our first two examples of this phenomenon also include another infelicity: the mixed – or at least severely shaken-up – metaphor. There follow two spectacular danglers. £3 for the first entry, £2 for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ One who does not possess a perfect grasp of a language, may feel that he is being insulted and, as racial relationships are somewhat delicate, one must tread as carefully as a cat lest it jumps violently out of a smouldering bag. **David Carrick**, *Financial Times* (Annabelle Conder).

☐ But now the thaw was over, and the wretched bugs who had confessed that they might have made mistakes through an excess of Stalinist zeal and had then crawled into the woodwork to lay low, were out again in strength sharpening their pincers. **Julian Symons**, *Sunday Times* (John Griffith).

☐ My friend, Albert Dando is a fat, jolly man of 45. Until she died two months ago, he was looking after a bedridden mother in Walsall, and he still has to look after an invalid father **John Hutchinson**, *The Times* (Anne Walston).

☐ The Lord Mayor of Birmingham, scene of the bloody clashes between police and demonstrators outside a National Front meeting, yesterday demanded: 'Bring back the birch.' **Staff Reporter**, *Daily Telegraph* (Susanna Millard).

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Invisible Worms

The Rear Column *Globe*
Streamers *Round House*
Antony and Cleopatra *Old Vic*

Simon Gray has always taken a keen interest in the primitive and the perverse, but up to now his anthropological forays have been confined to middle-class England. In *Spoiled*, for instance, he chronicled a married schoolmaster's slow seduction by a pet pupil of the same sex; and in *Otherwise Engaged* he recorded some of the mating habits of the Bloomsbury publisher, that sly and canny humanoid which likes to have young girls on the office carpet, then swallow its anti-VD pills, then go to the squash club for a game with a pro, then return home to its wife innocently smelling of locker-room carbolic. Nasty feelings are festering, ugly little rituals occurring, in the cellar beneath the lacquered floorboards of Gray's plays. *The Rear Column* is, then, a perfectly logical development on his part, though it goes rather further both horizontally and vertically, geographically and emotionally, than those who have hitherto associated him with Cambridge quads and Hampstead patios can possibly have expected.

Indeed, it is his attempt to reach out and in to the Heart of Darkness itself: an apt comparison, as it happens, since Conrad's tale was also based, though less literally, on the macabre doings of Barttelot, Jameson and the rest of Stanley's rearguard in the Congo of 1887. Mr Kurtz, it will be remembered, mumbles 'the horror, the horror' as he lies hallucinating. Here the cry that bubbles up and out of a rather similar nightmare is 'the worm, the worm'; and it, too, has reason and point.

The worm is already lurking in the apple when the play begins, and the situation is calculated to split the thing open and let the creature out. The hot, enervating months spent impotently hoping for relief can only increase the paranoia, the frustration and the rage of Barttelot, who came to the tropics convinced that Stanley was out to ruin his career, and determined to follow his orders with a lunatic punctiliousness upsetting to his subordinates. And those subordinates, too, have become more corroded than they realise by the regrettable tendency of the native bearers to die in large numbers from sickness, hunger, and their masters' somewhat forceful efforts to deter them from stealing food. It is no vast surprise when Barttelot finally runs amok, sinking his teeth into a black woman and thrusting his sword-stick into the houseboy's heart. It is not even surprising, though still pretty shocking, when the sweet and altruistic gentleman-artist Jameson offhandedly reports that he's bought a 13-year-old dish for a cannibal feast and recorded the whole ceremony for posterity. 'Good heavens,' he

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expostulates, as the others boggle, 'We've flogged them to death, we've watched them die by the score, what does it matter, one nigger girl . . . ?'

We've starved them, we've gassed them, we've watched them die by the thousand, what does it matter, one Jewish child? Why not experiment with his brain, or cut off his testicles, when he's doomed anyway? Simon Gray's aim, if I read him rightly, is to show us the logic of atrocity, the way in which civilised values and sanctions can become worn to the point at which the impossible suddenly becomes possible; and his execution is admirably painstaking and fair-minded. These are not monster colonialists wandered in from some comfily radical funhouse on the London fringe. They are men with firm convictions, strong taboos and good intentions. Indeed, there's something heroic about Barttelot's long, losing battle with his own unruly temper; and Jameson's generosity with his personal store of life-saving quinine verges on the saintly. But as one of the play's more obviously metaphoric moments suggests, the sound of drums from outside is more undermining than the toasts, carols and other rituals of an English Christmas are sustaining. The combination of Africa and their own limitations overwhelms these people, as it might have overwhelmed you and me. That, finally, is the play's subject: a vulnerability to evil shared by us all.

Don't be intimidated by the stingy reviews some of my brethren have given Mr Gray. To be sure, the action is rather sluggish and the language a bit cumbersome, as one might expect of a play about officer-caste Victorians whose lives have been reduced to a long, grim wait. But the closing revelations seem to me reward enough, and there's a fine, ironic coda in which a contemptuous Stanley remembers that he gave Barttelot command of the rear column because it was the one place he could 'do no harm' and left him orders that couldn't have been more 'flexible'. Besides, Gray's writing, Harold Pinter's unemphatic direction and a remarkably consistent company supply a super-abundance of that unfashionable theatrical commodity, individual character. Simon Ward, all bleary and woozy in extremis, is the sahib who finds that wit and urbanity aren't a sufficient survival-kit; Clive Francis, white and tearful, the one who makes a similar discovery about his own main trait, wrangling and blustering: and Jeremy Iron's gentle Jameson has that coolness, that detachment, which makes it conceivable that he might end by procuring tots for pots. But what sticks in my mind is the crooked, wonky smile that regularly cracks across the face of Barry Foster's tense and festering Barttelot. It comes to express suspicion, fear, despair, and even hatred. If a native is disobedient, the major's reaction is to go outside and simply stare at him, grinning; and the effect, so we're told, is pretty scary. It is just one of many improbable things that this exceedingly able play makes plausible.

Streamers is the second of David Rabe's Vietnam studies to hit London in the past month, and, though it lacks the size and resonance of *Sticks and Bones*, its picture of (variously) earnest, easy-going, neurotic and psychotic rookies is agreeably observant and sympathetic. The best, most haunting moments involve two sergeants, lately returned Stateside from zapping gooks and now finding solace from intolerable memories in booze and childish games. Meanwhile, Toby Robertson has done what yours truly advised after the Edinburgh Festival: given Barbara Jefford and John Turner, the principal players in the Prospect *All For Love*, the Shakespearean roles until now taken by Dorothy Tutin and Alec McCowen. The result is a success but not, I fear, the vast one my faith in Miss Jefford's emotional power had led me to prophesy. She has her moments – an odd, ugly gurgle of misery after her lover's first military defeat – but she tends to bring out Cleopatra's majesty rather than her skittishness or her torment, and there is certainly no strong sexual bond between her and Mr Turner's fruity and elegant Antony. A mistake, and a pity.

Jazz

Charles Fox

In the Flesh

Gil Evans Orchestra *Royal Festival Hall*
Gil Evans: 'There Comes A Time' *RCA* £3.99

That old dictum about seeing being equated with believing is, Irish though it seems, especially true of music, particularly the unfamiliar kind. For instance, watching how the performers set about things must help the neophyte get to grips with Indian music or avant-garde jazz, even reggae. It turns out to be true of the Gil Evans Orchestra, an ensemble many people might imagine to be more at home in the recording studio; yet it demolished that particular theory on its first-ever appearance in London. The corollary, of course, is that anyone who attended that concert is far more likely to enjoy the LP.

Silver-haired, slim, looking like a reluctant sheriff in a Hollywood Western despite his loganberry-purple trousers, Evans scarcely puts one in mind of a catalyst. Yet that is what he is on the concert platform, wandering from piano to electric piano, throwing out musical ideas; some got taken up by the band, others were left alone. In many numbers it was the musicians who decided, on the spur of the moment which of them would stand up to take a solo. All very spontaneous and democratic, but still sparked off by that frail-looking figure. Often acclaimed for his command of textures, his gift for devising sumptuous contexts, Gil Evans has sometimes been criticised, rather like Duke Ellington, for failing to provide development – in the commonly accepted sense. These textures, rather like Delius's, can establish an atmosphere, an ebb and flow which, if it works, convinces. Or else the soloists contribute a different sort of development, as they should for all genuine jazz composers.

Now in his mid-sixties, Evans grew up under the spell of Louis Armstrong and has soldiered on long enough to assimilate electronic aids as well. Yet he remains an ardent traditionalist, not only aware of the past but intent on translating at least some of it into the present. The LP contains his second go at *King Porter Stomp*, written by Jelly Roll Morton long before World War I, but scored here to take into account the history in between. Similarly, the concert began and ended with bebop themes, the first by Thelonious Monk, the other by Charlie Parker, while somewhere in between came Charles Mingus's *Orange Was The Colour Of Her Dress, Then Blue Silk*, uncoiling slowly like most of Mingus's tunes.

But if Gil Evans's orchestration dominates, his own themes, as usual, remain few and far between. One of them, *Variation on the Misery*, a blues, voiced – for sopranino, soprano and tenor saxophones – in a way reminiscent of Ellington's *The Mooche*, became a vehicle for superb trumpet playing by Marvin Peterson. The evening threw up other virtuosi too: Bob Stewart, playing the tuba in what amounted to a short concerto; the alto saxophonist Dave Sanborn, who featured in Jimi Hendrix's tune, *Angel* (he plays Hendrix's *Little Wing* on the LP); and George Adams, emotional in the best sense, uninhibited enough to lean back and waggle his shoulders in mid-solo, just as if he were playing tenor with Lionel Hampton at the Apollo rather than touring on the Arts Council's Contemporary Music Network. Evans, of course, is self-taught, just like – as orchestrators, anyway – Jelly Roll, Duke, Tadd Dameron and our own Stan Tracey. He learned by writing for bands and hearing how it sounded. It was only after establishing himself as a commercial arranger in the 1940s that Evans got round to catching up on his formal musical education. That catching up involved getting familiar with Russian composers – Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Stravinsky – an enthusiasm reflected in his scoring.

If Saturday's performance counts as one of the finest jazz concerts to take place on British soil, the LP must be regarded as slightly disappointing. The sound, for a start, is boxed in, the dynamics squeezed too flat. And while the music is not so electronic as on a couple of earlier records (one had six synthesisers whirring away), it is sufficiently so to project an ambience that comes across better in the flesh. But there is a lengthy version of Tony Williams's composition, *There Comes A Time*, with aggressive tenor playing by Billy Harper, and – for admirers of *Miles Ahead*, Evans's 20-year-old collaboration with Miles Davis – a disconcerting new version of

Among this week's contributors:

WILLIAM SHAWCROSS is completing a history of the aftermath of the war in Cambodia.

Until his recent retirement GRAHAM HOUGH was Professor of English at Cambridge. His *Selected Essays* will be published in the autumn.

MARK ELVIN is the author of *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (1973).

GEORGE STEINER's most recent book is *After Babel* (Oxford).

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The Meaning Of The Blues. Anyone who helped to swell the ovation at the end of that RFH concert, however, will be startled to hear that the Gil Evans Orchestra gave only a single public performance – a benefit, too – in America during 1977; and that, although *There Comes A Time* was made a couple of years ago, no other recording is waiting to be released. Somebody had better get busy, otherwise history will be handing out yet another black mark.

Magazines

George Steiner

Yours Truly

Dear Literary Editor,

You ask me about 'Magazines'. I hardly see any and have no confident notion of the one you profess to represent. Your own name does strike a bell, albeit an exceedingly faint one. I trust I am right in associating it with a book on domestic flora (the dandelion-vetch, was it?) published a good many years ago, but still obtainable in the quieter remainder-shops. This suggests that we are both of a certain age, on the sunset flank of Nebo as it were, and you will therefore be hardly surprised if I confess to a life-long addiction to the *Review of Eschatological Ontology* (*REO* to its intimates).

How this addiction came about, that is to say whether it preceded my fifth birthday, of which a life-subscription, together with the option of acquiring bound copies of the *Jahrschrift* and quinquennial index was the highlight, I am no longer able to say. But soon that puce cover and the Bodoni-Mauernschläger lettering, so distinct from the flamboyant serifs of *Scrutiny*, became an indispensable feature of my daily existence. You will hasten to ask me which article or series of articles it was that sticks in my memory and I can only answer candidly (and, again, you may well have anticipated my reply): it was the eleventh article in Professor Estes Lampeter's famous analysis of the impossibility of a second world war, an analysis firmly based on the ontological *insouciance*, and dare one say domestic charisma, of the German chancellor in all its anagogical aspects – an article, I need hardly add, which the contingent vulgarity of subsequent events has *not* refuted, but on the contrary made more timely.

The decision to renumber fascicules XLCVIII to XLCIX and to catalogue the *acta* of the XXXVIth congress on eschatological *parousia* as *hors serie* is not one to which I have, to this day, wholly reconciled myself. But no one would question the vigour of *REO* in the so-called post-war years. Need I remind you of the enormous attention gained by the questionnaire – a novel feature, I confess – 'Are You Up or Down?', to which the Uniate Archpriest's reply 'Neither', with its admittedly concise yet inferentially copious adumbrations of a pneumatological scale of values, became, yes, I say so emphatically, canonic. Whether the fourfold acrostic, emblematic to be sure of exceedingly familiar, even banal, counters such as the tetragrammatic soterology of the Chichester Pentecostalists, ought to have been introduced so soon, and given such typographical prepotence (how much we older subscribers miss p.68 as we once knew it), may be a fair, indeed a probing question. But who would have wanted to miss the extraordinary, truly epiphanic moment in which Father Burgess showed that a very simple permutation of the sixth letter in the homophonous rebus of the clue-words, read boustrophedonically to be sure, would yield the heretical, long-suppressed version of the Flagellant's introit? (And what has happened to dear Fr.Burgess? One hears dreadful whisperings of Rome.) Nor ought one to leave unmentioned those other bright, if lightweight rubrics: 'The Short View', 'The Middle-Range View', 'Twenty-Seven Years Ago', and that audacious series on 'Books I Have Not Read' with its truly massive contribution on Hegel and Heidegger by the Waynflete and Knightsbridge Professors or the definitive evacuative treatment of Gray's Anatomy by Sir Oswald Jonathan, KCVO, PBA, FRES, FRS, quondam President of the College of Surgeons.

You will not misjudge me when I say that the day on which the *REO* elected to become the NEW *Review of Eschatological Ontology* was, for many of us, a black one, an *antimessianischerungeburtstag* as German slang has it. The heart cried out, Why?, and the rumoured answer that such transformation would bring immediate largesse from the Arts Council brought little balm. To me, *NREO* has never again been that impatiently awaited, feverishly perused familiar it once was. Of course there *are* the new fold-out pictures (a point I would rather not expatiate on), and there *is* the calendar of eschatological occasions and the new letter-column in which the editor dwells upon himself under a variety of, alas too transparent, pseudonyms. And there is the new tone of reviewing – I need only cite Prebendary Orbes's truly devastating review of Persimmon's modest tome *Corrigenda to Orbes*, or the moving encomium of the editor's *Short Poems on the Millennia* by the editor's niece, the Very Rev. Lady Emma of the House of Seven Silences. And there is that sparkling *rubrique mondaine*, or 'names that should be dropped in eschatological ontology', so often written, a truly Byzantine touch, by the morganatic ladies of one's academic colleagues (you will remember the ripple of visceral mirth provoked in many a metaphysician's closet by the vignettes on 'Alpha & Omega: Not What it Used to Be on Russell Square').

But I wander. Let me say simply that if the *NREO* is *not* the *REO* (the negative here carrying the full pressure of felt life and poised discrimination which it has acquired, *pace* the murderous cheapening of negativity in the mass media and literary quarterlies), it is none the less a still small voice in the whirlwind to which there looks forward, as through a glass darkly, and on every 19th Thursday afternoon in leap-year,

Your most obdt. servant,
GEORGE STEINER

Weekend Competition

No 2504 **Set by C. Vita-Finzi**

What would have happened if Charmian had had some snake-bite serum on her? Or if Anna Karenina had telephoned the Samaritans? Competitors are asked to rewrite the climactic scene of any classic in the light of social and technological developments. Prose or verse; 150 words max; by 17 March.

Result of No 2501 **Set by King Pong**

We asked you to rewrite the last stanza of Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode* in the style of any 20th-century poet.

Report **by PC 49**

Reference last week's competitorial knees-up, the boys in blue have a saying: it's the rich wot gets the pleasure, it's the Force wot sweeps the mess. Little Keith didn't tell you the half of it. All that fancy writing of his about how exciting and glamorous it was; what does he know about getting wine-stains out of deep-plush pile? (*He* was swanking around shouting 'Tread it in, tread it in, it's good for carpets!') About what happens when 'Smasher' Ransome lives up to his *nom de plume*? About scraping . . . well, need I pursue the matter? And the *toilets* . . . I even overheard T. Griffiths boasting to Al Fresco that he was an anarchist. All that can be said in your favour is that after your BOP behaviour (no – it means Breach Of the Peace where I come from) you did the decent and turned in an excellent spread of entries. Forensics said they were very pleased with your stylistic prints; but they must have their little joke, mustn't they? A coroner's jury of green ones each, for Hughes, Ginsberg, Empson, Holub, and Betjeman.

The Hawk in the Gutter

Landscapes lie sullen:
Scrublands, dank woods and hulking hills
Menace me, annunciating madness,
Just as they did when in dark ponds I fished
For pike, immense, malevolent and old
Or hunted hares through vengeful thistle spikes
In the blue summer air.
Shriek of torn flesh and grinding crunch
of bone
Sing to me still.
Clouds, sick with sinister surgery, obscure
The sombre glint of the sun's eye,
Mocking the mutability of man,
His tiresome toils and toys.
In me the flower implants its poisoned dart,
Flushing my veins with a vile venom
Too deep for cleverness or care to cure.
ROBERT BAIRD

Howl

I have seen the best scenery of my generation
Go mad, careening crazy into pollution
& worse.
And I have loved it still within my secret
angel heart.
And I have loved Brooklyn quartered and
fretted with channels
Of cars & cars & buildings, and more
and higher.
And I was a snot-nosed skinny Jewish kid, dear,
Not knowing my fearful, joyful, tearful
mysterious Self.
And not knowing how Karma holds us all,

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And even the sunsets have been watched
before by men undying.
Oh America, profound busted crazy sweet
samsara, even your flowers Howl.
ROY KELLY

Let It Go

All photosynthesis must have a scheme;
No lover would prognosticate divorce.
Where water moves, projection is the theme.

When legs oblige big planets have a force.
White hairs grow solemn when the sun discards
Fallacious wisdom for a tribal source.

Ethnology or rumour? Yellow cards
For those rude sinners, trophies for the fit,
With whom must empathise reflective bards

Who learn, by cardiac measure or slow wit,
The differential of a chemic dream,
Small cells still to the fancy may transmit.
BASIL RANSOME

If P, then I

Let us beat about the bushes.
If we consider the Poet – P
and the Intimations – I
the graph tells us that they are no longer
on a collision course.
Yet it is certain that the Intimations exist:
they glint off the brooks,
the wind turns their edge.
Every dawn, every sunset
my mangy eye scratches at the door of
the clouds;
let the youths ride their skateboards
into immortality.
When I look into a primrose
I only see men dying;
but I can ride this too.
In this situation tears are superfluous.
JOHN PURKIS

Continual Dew

Drinking fountains, fields for ponies,
Surrey hills, suburban Groves,
How I love your courts for tennis,
Where each Doris had her Dennis
(Venus she, and he Adonis),
Cocktail dresses, greens and mauves!

I love them still as in the Twenties,
Nobody could love them more,
Life was absolutely topping –
We were reading without stopping
Percy Westermans and Hentys,
No adventure seemed a bore.

Though I'm not completely sober
And my meaning isn't clear,
I feel swamped by my own sweetness –
Sometimes I'd escape with fleetness,
Like a chocolate-enrober
Rushing to the pub for beer!

Doris, you were young and tender,
Lovely in your underwear,
You'd convert me more than Newman!
You're a flower, and I am human,
Lusting for your warm suspender,
Keen to show you I still care!
GAVIN EWART

Tony Miles

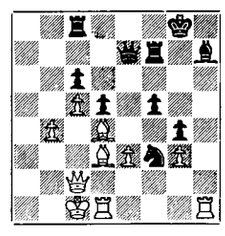
Chess

No 73 **Korchnoy**

This week I should like to offer two interesting games. The first is the 13th game of the Korchnoy-Spassky match which Korchnoy described sarcastically as 'Spassky's greatest achievement'

White: V. Korchnoy **Black: B. Spassky**

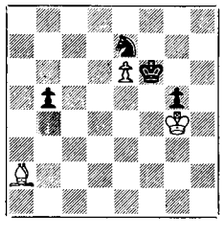
1. P-QB4, P-K3; 2. N-QB3, P-KB4; 3. P-KN3, N-KB3; 4. B-N2, B-K2; 5. P-K3, 0-0; 6. KN-K2, P-B3; 7. P-Q4, P-Q4; 8. P-N3, B-Q2; 9. B-N2, B-K1; 10. N-B4, B-B2; 11. N-Q3, QN-Q2; 12. Q-B2, R-B1; 13. P-B5, P-QN3; 14. P-QN4, P-KN4; 15. N-K2, B-N3; 16. P-KR4, P-KR3; 17. RP x P, RP x P; 18. N-K5, B-R2; 19. P-B3, P x P; 20. QP x P, N x N; 21. B x N, N-Q2; 22. B-N2, B-B3; 23. N-Q4, Q-K2; 24. P-B4, KR-B2; 25. 0-0-0, P-R4; 26. P-R3, P x P; 27. P x P, P-N5; 28. B-B1, B x N; 29. B x B, P-K4; 30. P x P, N x KP; 31. B-Q3, N-B6. White has a distinct positional advantage (see board) and should probably just continue with 32. K-N2. However, Korchnoy had a complete hallucination or he was hypnotised, and the finish was . . . **32. B x P, R x B; 33. Q x R, B x Q Resigns.** (34. R-R8ch is not mate!)



Secondly, the game that hit the headlines at Wijk-aan-Zee: Korchnoy sensationally losing to the young Dutch player van der Sterren. I was unable to deal with it last week as originally promised.

White: P. van der Sterren Black: V. Korchnoy

1. P-K4, P-K3; 2. P-Q4, P-Q4; 3. N-QB3. Considering that van der Sterren had one out of seven at this point 3. P x P must have been a temptation. **3. . . . B-N5; 4. P-K5, P-QB4; 5. P-QR3, B x Nch; 6. P x B, N-K2; 7. N-B3, QN-B3; 8. B-Q3, Q-R4; 9. 0-0, P-B5; 10. B-K2, B-Q2; 11. P-QR4, N-B1!?** (immediately going after the QRP. But White has considerable counterplay). **12. Q-Q2, N-N3; 13. Q-N5, KR-KN1; 14. R-R3, P-KR3; 15. Q-R5, N(N3) x P; 16. P-N3, P-QN4; 17. B-Q2, Q-Q1; 18. R-N1, Q-K2; 19. R(R3)-R1, P-R3; 20. N-R4, 0-0-0; 21. N-N2, K-B2; 22. N-K3, R-QR1; 23. P-B4, N-N3; 24. P-B5, P-N5; 25. R-KB1, P-N3; 26. P x KNP, R x P; 27. Q-B3, B-K1; 28. Q-B4, P x P; 29. B x P(B6), Q-N4; 30. Q-B3, P-QR4; 31. N-N2, N-N5; 32. N-B4, KR-N1; 33. KR-N1, Q-Q1; 34. Q-B1, N-B3; 35. R-N5, P-R5; 36. Q-N1, R-R3; 37. Q-N2; B-Q2; 38. Q-R3, N x QP.** Black's attempts to exploit his extra pawn have only exposed his own King and White is making steady progress on the dark squares. Whether Black's last move is an oversight or desperation I do not know; **39. Q-B5ch, K-N2** (or 39. . . . N-B3; 40. B-QR5) **40. B x N, B x R; 41. Q x B, P-R6; 42. B-R5, Q-B2; 43. N-K2, Q-K2; 44. N-B3, Q-Q2; 45. Q-N4, R-N4; 46. R x P, R x R; 47. Q x Nch, K-R1; 48. N-N5, Q-N2; 49. Q-Q8ch, Q-N1; 50. Q-Q7, Q-N2; 51. Q-K8ch, Q-N1; 52. Q-B6ch, Q-N2; 53. Q-K8ch, Q-N1; 54. Q-B6ch, Q-N2; 55. Q-Q6, QR x Pch; 56. P x R, Q x N; 57. Q-B8ch, K-N2; 58. Q x Pch, K-N1; 59. K-N2, Q-R5; 60. Q-B8ch Resigns.**



Problem 73

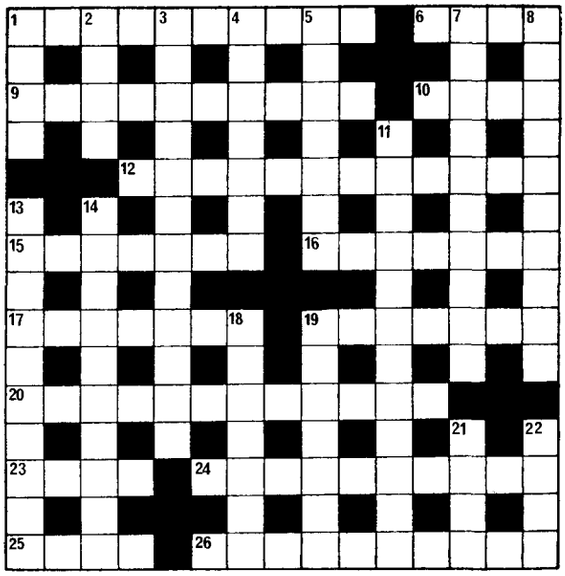
Black to play. Can he win? Answers to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than 15 March.

Solution to Problem 71

Nonsense. 1. . . . B-B3? 2. K-Q6! P-R5! 3. P-N5! draws. 1. . . . P-R5! wins e.g. 2. K-Q6, P-R6; 3. P-R7, B-B3! 4. K x B, P-R7; 5. K-B7, P-R8=Q; 6. K-N8 then several Queen checks Q2-N4-R3-N3-B2-B1 mate.

Weekend Crossword 1254

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1254, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 14 March.



ACROSS

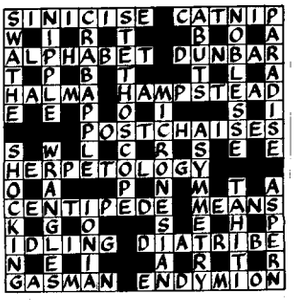
1. Squander former international flags (4, 6).
6. Poem which is always among those picked out for anthologies (4).
9. Drink one would have to take a second time if there were no guide to the sea (10).
10. If you brought a boy back after this examination it would be a disgrace (4).
12. Being inborn it makes our descent an enigma (6, 6).
15. Record a piece of music for a star (7).
16. Resentment when one has gone wrong after failure (7).
17. It is about time the date is changed, but it is what inflation did (7).
19. Confident although there is a mixed reaction lacking in love (7).
20. Remark about people being followed by this in France for a start (12).
23. Island necessary for a nation at war (4).
24. Get involved with each other were Tintin involved (10).
25. Prate softly but get out of breath (4).
26. What a photographer uses to harass a showy person (5, 5).

DOWN

1. Degree and honour for a composer (4).
2. Tree which shows us to be without a father (4).
3. Poet's talk sounding like rain? (12).
4. Vibrations when RT and morse are scrambled (7).
5. Lived for a team in Arsenal colour (7).
7. Gear needed for playing on a true pitch (7, 3).
8. Rejecting study about the rise of the sea (10).
11. Prohibit a socialist uprising and grab a monster (12).
13. Using the claws but giving up the fight (10).
14. Extra payment for Merchant Navy in secret deal (10).
18. Church leader's vessel in port (7).
19. Married during frolics, they have temporary lodgings (7).
21. More sanctimonious beside the sea? (4).
22. Extremely light (4).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1253



Prizewinners to No 1253

I. F. Crookes (London SE8)
Mairin de Burca (Dublin)
C. Ballantine (Cheltenham)

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APPOINTMENTS

THE LABOUR PARTY
has a vacancy for a

Research Assistant

(Salary range £3,215 to £4,515 p.a., depending on appropriate experience in a similar capacity.)

Applicants should have an interest in, and knowledge of, economics and economic policy issues. An Honours Degree, though not essential, would be a considerable advantage. Duties will include the preparation of papers on economic issues and will involve a good understanding of applied macro economics. A background of activity in The Labour Party, or in the wider Labour Movement, would also be of considerable advantage.

Application forms and conditions of employment can be obtained from:
The Administrative and Personnel Officer,
The Labour Party, Transport House,
Smith Square, London SW1P 3JA.
Tel: 01-834 9434.

Completed application forms should be returned not later than Thursday, 23 March 1978.

NATIONAL UNION OF BANK EMPLOYEES
Appointment of

TRADE UNION ORGANISER

for the NORTH WEST and NORTH EAST AREAS

Applications are invited from persons of suitable qualifications and trade union background for the above post of Area Organiser.

Commencing salary £3,701 per annum rising to £4,536 per annum. (Annual salary review July 1978). Car provided. Good holidays and Conditions of Service. Considerable travel is involved in this appointment.

Applications giving full details of age, qualifications and previous positions held should be addressed to: **Mr John James, National Organiser, NUBE, 102 Bute Street, Cardiff CF1 6AD** not later than **Thursday, 30 March 1978.**

BRITISH ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION
The performers' trade union

wish to appoint a **LEGAL OFFICER** to be based at the Association's London office and to:

★ Deal with a very large number of individual legal claims made on behalf of members.

★ Represent members before joint industrial and other tribunals.

★ Advise members and the Union on National Insurance, Social Security and Income Tax matters.

★ Generally advise the Council of Equity on legal and legislative matters.

Legal qualifications as a solicitor or barrister are obviously desirable as is an understanding of and sympathy with trade unions.

Salary negotiable dependent upon qualifications and experience.

APPLICATION FORMS — can be obtained by writing to: **Peter Plouviez, General Secretary, British Actors' Equity, 8 Harley St, London W1N 2AB.**

Re-advertisement
Previous applicants need not apply

TRADE UNION ORGANISER

NATIONAL UNION OF BANK EMPLOYEES

require an Organiser to work in the London area. Previous experience in this type of employment an advantage. Commencing Salary £3,701 per annum on scale rising to £4,536 per annum. (a London allowance of £657 per annum is paid in addition to the above salary and the annual salary review will take place in July 1978). Car provided. Good holidays and Condition of Service.

Applications giving full details of age, qualifications and previous posts held should be addressed to: ***Mr John James, National Organiser, NUBE,*** **102 Bute Street, Cardiff CF1 6AD** not later than **Thursday 30 March 1978.**

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THE STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

is seriously considering opening a bookshop in the Bristol area which would stock a wide range of books on Theology, Politics, Education, Psychology and related topics, together with some general fiction and reference works.

We are looking for someone with relevant experience to take responsibility for getting this project off the ground. Salary in region of £2,400 p.a. plus a percentage of profits.

Contact: S.C.M., Wick Court, Wick, Nr Bristol BS15 5RD, telling us as much as possible about yourself.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Experienced research worker required to collect and analyse information on the structures and procedures of collective bargaining, for a specialist publication. Applicants must have a wide knowledge of the subject. Starting salary around £5,000 p.a.

Application forms from:
Ron Arnold,
Incomes Data Services,
140 Great Portland Street,
London W1. 01-580 0521

MEDICAL/SECRETARIES and receptionists urgently required for doctors and hospitals, perm. and temp. M. & S. Agency, 124 Gloucester Road, SW7. 373 7185.

THE BRITISH SCHOOL AT ROME

APPOINTMENT OF ADMINISTRATOR

Applications are invited from British, Commonwealth or Italian subjects for the post of Administrator (in Rome). Vacant Autumn 1978. The British School is a post graduate institute for humanities research and the promotion of practising arts. The Administrator will have administrative responsibilities under the Director.

Information and application forms which must be completed and returned by 23 March 1978, are obtainable from:

The Hon. General Secretary, The British School at Rome, 1 Lowther Gardens, Exhibition Road, London SW7 2AA. Tel. 01-589 3665.

THE LABOUR PARTY
requires a

Secretary/Shorthand Typist

for head of International Dept. Some interest in the Labour Movement and current affairs, would be an advantage.

Salary is £3,220-£3,365 p.a., depending on appropriate experience in a similar capacity. 33¼ hrs per week, LVs provided. Applications to:

The Administrative & Personnel Officer, The Labour Party, Transport House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3JA.
Tel. 01-834 9434, by Friday 10 March 1978.

COMMUNITY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS
The National Volunteer Agency

Volunteer Director

CSV has established a programme with five local authorities, designed to involve children in care in service to the community. Funded by the DHSS, it has already, in its first year, fruitfully involved over 120 young people in care in community service projects, as an alternative to residential care.

A field based Volunteer Director is now needed to work in the London Borough of Wandsworth on such a scheme. The worker will be expected to involve approximately 30 children in care, in the age range 15-18, in full time community service projects each year.

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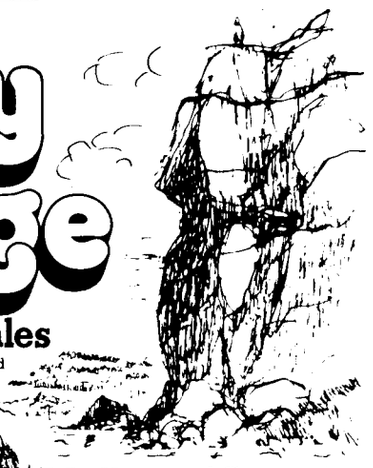

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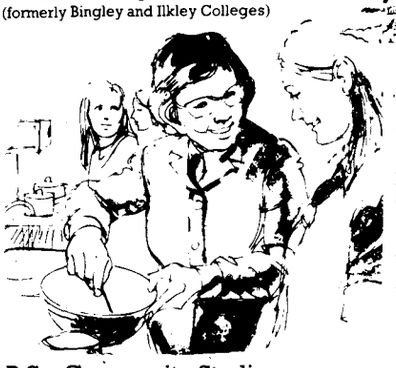

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Vol. 95 No. 2450

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Theatres

ALDWYCH THEATRE (Royal Shakespeare Company) 836 6404. Recorded booking info 836 5332. Final perfs of 1977/78 season. Jonson's 'The Alchemist', 'The Comedy of Errors', Brecht's 'The Days of The Commune', Congreve's 'The Way of The World'. See daily press for dates and times. New season starts 4 April. RSC also at The Warehouse Donmar Theatre in final perfs of Edward Bond's 'The Bundle', Barrie Keeffe's 'Frozen Assets', James Robson's 'Factory Birds', Charles Wood's 'Dingo'. RSC also at the Piccadilly Theatre in Peter Nichols' 'Privates on Parade'.

ALMOST FREE, 9 Rupert St., W1. Bookings 485 6224. 'One Penny for Israel' by Laurence Collinson. Mon.-Thurs. 1.15 p.m. Suns. 2.30 & 4.30 p.m.

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Meetings

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CENTRAL LONDON FABIAN SOCIETY. John Biffen (former member of the Shadow Cabinet) on 'Political and Economic Consensus in 1978'. 8 March 7.30 p.m. at 5 Tavistock Place, WC1. All welcome.

ADLERIAN SOCIETY. 'Adlerian Approach to Psychosomatics', Doris Rayner, Child Psychotherapist. Tuesday 7 March 7.30 p.m. Mary Sumner Hall, 24 Tufton St, SW1. *Visitors welcome 50p (students 25p).*

BUDDHISM IN LONDON. Details: British Buddhist Assoc. 242 5538 (office hrs).

NEW COMMUNIST PARTY Public Meeting. Speakers: Dave Bolton, former Vice Pres. Scottish NUM and Joe Parker, London Organiser Sheet Metal Wkrs, in their personal capacity, and Sid French, Nat. Secty NCP on 'The Capitalist Crisis — the socialist alternative'. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., WC1. Fri. 10 March 8 p.m. Adm. 10p.

ISRAEL & SOUTH AFRICA — 2 Racist States! Speaker: Peter Hellyer (author of UN report on Israeli/S. African economic ties). Sunday 12 March 2 p.m. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq. Entry free. London Area, British Anti-Zionist Organisation (BAZO), c/o 58 Old Brompton Rd, SW7.

SCOTTISH? SOCIALIST? An open meeting of the SLP, 8 March, 7.45 p.m. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1.

'PROSTITUTION AND HUMANISM': talk by Helen Buckingham, London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, W8. *Sun. 5 March 8 p.m. Admission 30p.*

THEOSOPHY. Simple talks for inquirers: Sun. 5 Mar. 8 p.m. 'Cycles and Human Destiny'. S.a.e. free pamphlet, book list. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2.

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